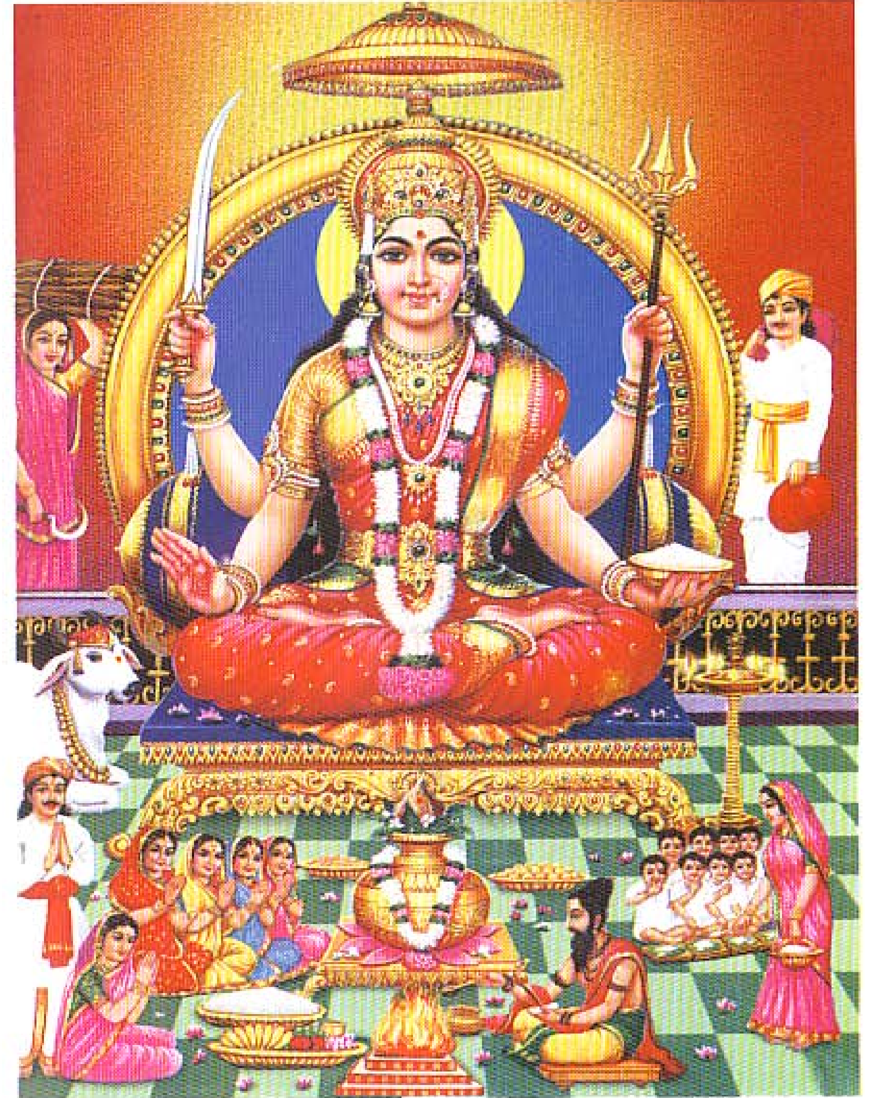
HINDU TRADITIONS

COLOMBO YOUNG WOMEN'S HINDU ASSOCIATION

Vinayagar Vanakkam



Ainthu karaththanai aanai muhath thanai
Inthin ilampirai pohlum eyitranai
Nanthi mahan thanai gnaanak kozhunthinai
Punthiyil vaiththadi pottrukintrene (Thirumoolar)



Salutations at the lotus feet of Shakthi

Thanam tharum Kalvi Tharum Oru Naalum Thalarvariya
Manam Tharum Deiva Vadivum Tharum Nenjil Vanchamilla
Inam Tharum Nallana Ellaam Tharum Anbar Enbavaruke
Kanam Tharum Poongkuzhalal Abirami Kadaik kankale

HINDU TRADITIONS

Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association
2004

Title : **Hindu Traditions**

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We are presenting before you the traditional customs followed by the Northern and Eastern territories of Sri Lanka. The customs / ceremonies may vary from village to village. Based on the reception this book receives, the customs and ceremonies of other states would also be looked into. This book has been compiled based on the treatise of great scholars and the information gathered from various sources.

The heritage of Hinduism narrated in this book are mostly followed by the Hindus of Sri Lanka. Those who wish to offer their valued advice can write to us, so that it could be considered for inclusion in the subsequent editions.

Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association
15, Bagatalle Road, Colombo - 03.

Message

We are glad to forward this message to the book " Hindu Traditions", being brought out by the Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association.

We understand that this book provides clear explanations for the countless rituals and traditions followed in the Hindu faith. In these days, when people, especially the youth, probe every field of knowledge, with scientific outlook and spirit, it is essential and necessary also that our religious traditions are also explained scientifically, so that the faith of people in these traditions become strong and rewarding.

As husk protects the rice, so also these religious traditions protect the religious values and truths. But we have to sound a note of caution here. Husk has value only to the extent of protecting rice, but it cannot replace rice in any way. Similarly, though the rituals and traditions protect values like love for God, compassion to all living beings, living in harmony with nature etc., they should not be followed mechanically, out of fear or by force of habit. Unless the traditions are followed sincerely, coupled with moral strength, they lead mankind to superstition and become useless burden on humanity.

We hope this book will be well received by our people, young and old. We very much congratulate the Colombo young Women's Hindu Association for bringing out this book at a time when our people are rushing madly and blindly towards alien culture ignorant of the richness of our own age - old culture and traditions!

(Swami Atmaghanananda)

Felicitation

I am happy to be associated with the publication of the book 'Hindu Traditions' which explains vividly the traditional, cultural and religious ceremonies of Hinduism, the most ancient religion in world history.

Currently a large majority of Hindus have migrated and settled world wide. This book is really being published to benefit the younger generation adopting Hinduism, all over the world, but living in different cultural and social environment.

Our Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association is one amongst the institutions that cares to protect and promote the culture of Hindu religion, which originated some 5000 years ago in the Sindu River bed during the Harappa-Mohanjedaro Civilization and Hinduism is a religion based on spiritual experience and philosophies. It is the oldest religion of all known religions . Hinduism is not dogmatic in its teachings, there are no rigid rules, no restrictions. Instead, the philosophy allows each one to evolve to his own convictions. Thus we feel proud to publish this book on 'Hindu Traditions'.

In this book, the meaningful ceremonies and the traditional rituals have been explained, with reasons, in easily understandable simple language. In that respect this book would be a guide for younger generation interested to learn the religious cultural aspects of Hinduism.

This is the dream publication of Mrs.Vanaja Thavayogarajah, Vice-president of our Association. I extend my heartiest congratulations for her unique contribution.As this book is being published with the extensive support of prominent leaders of the Hindu community, it is my desire that this book should be available in all Hindu Homes. I worship 'Matha Parasakthi' to shower Her Blessings for a warm reception for this publication.

Yamuna Ganesalingam
President
Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association.

Preface

The publication of this book 'Hindu Traditions' has fulfilled my longing desire to contribute to our society, in educating the younger generation in our traditions. I will always be grateful to the Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association for their extensive co-operation in compiling this book.

The Tamil culture did not arise out of superstitions. These customs and ceremonies have been developed only to reveal the fundamental aspects of our life to others. We, the Hindus, sometimes don't know the way to perform these traditional ceremonies. Many of us just go along with the traditions without any explanations as why this has to be done.

We know how much care our ancestors have taken to keep our Hindu culture intact. Hindu missions and Scholars have published books on our traditions, in order to conserve our tradition and heritage, and prevent it from being destroyed in the course of time and developments in culture.The change in life style due to science and cultural developments is unavoidable. However, our intention in publishing this book is to provide a detailed description, with pictures, of the ceremonies from birth to death, fasts and festivals, religious hymns, and information from our scriptures.

It is important to note, that all the customs and ceremonies presented in this book are mainly based on those followed by Jaffna Hindus.

Many people have immensely participated, in compiling this book. The contribution by the Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association is incredible in collecting data, compiling them cogently, printing, editing and bringing out this book as an elegant publication. I consider their participation, tireless effort and dedication as the primary reason behind the success of this publication.

I strongly believe that this book would serve as a useful guide to the Hindu Community living all over the world, especially the younger generation.

Vanaja Thavayogarajah
Vice-President
Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association

Hinduism

*H*induism is the most ancient religion amongst those practiced all over the world. It was initially known as 'Sanadhana Dharma'. Hinduism was neither found by a prophet nor an individual person of historical importance. It cannot be determined how or when it originated, or by whom it was founded. Hence, there is a concept that the Lord Himself created Hinduism to guide the human society.

Hinduism gives much freedom in following the religious principles and the methods of worship. Even though Hinduism has many variations, it enhances the religion rather than restrict it. It has survived through the ages due to its uniqueness.

The basic principle is the oneness of the Lord though worshipped in different forms and names. The significance of Hinduism is idol worship, and the worship of the five elements of nature viz earth, water, space, air and fire. The Upanishad states, "Though cows are of different colours, their milk is white". Like-wise, though the methods of worship are different, the Lord is one.

There are three aspects in Hinduism, namely philosophy , rituals and mythology. Philosophy - Gnana form, cannot be understood by everyone in the first instance. Rituals - Karma form, was created to be performed and practiced in day-to-day life. Mythology - story form, explains the philosophies through stories.

Rituals are performed to explain the philosophies of Hinduism. Most people are attracted to the religion due to rituals. The fasts and ceremonies are the initial stage, while the philosophy is the ultimate stage. It is the duty of Gurus to teach people the philosophies that lie behind the observances of rituals. It is essential to perform homams, charities, fasts, meditations and prayers in order to purify onceself and lead a better life.



Thirugnanasampanthar, Thirunavukkarasar, Sundarar, Manickavasakar



Theivappulavar Thiruvalluvar

Srila Sri Arumuga Navalar
The Most renowned Saiva Dignitary of Sri Lanka.

Aum

PANCHA PURANAM

Thiruchittampalam



THEVARAM

Pidiyathan uruvumai kolahmigu kariyathu
Vadikodu thanathadi valipadum avaridar
Kadigana pathivara arulinan migukodai
Vadivinar. payilvali valamurai Iraiyeh

- *Thirugnanasambanthar*

THIRUVASAKAM

Ammaiya appa oppilaa maniyae
Anbinil vilaintha aaramudhae
Poimaye perukkip polzhuthinaich churrukkum
Pulzhuthani pulaiyanaen thanakku
Semayae aaya sivapatham aliththa
Selvamae Siva Perumaanae
Immayae unnaich chikkenap pidiththaen
Engezhun tharulu vathiniyae

- *Manickavasagar*

THIRUVISAIPA

Olivalar vilakkae, ulappilaa ondre
Unarvusoozh kadanthathor unarvae
Thelivalar palingkin thiralmanik kundrae
Siththaththul thiththikkum thaenae
Alivalar ullaththul aananththak kaniyae
Ampalam aadarangakaha
Velivalar theyvak kuuthukan thaayaith
Thondanae vilampumaa vilambae

- *Thirumalikai Thevar*

THIRUPALLAANDU

Paalukku Palakan vhendy
Azhuthidap paarkadal eenthapiraan
Maalukku chakaram andrarul
Seithavan manniya thillai - thannul
Allikku anthanar vaalkindra
Chittrampalamae idamaagap
Paaliththunattam payila - vallaanukkay
Pallaandu Kooruthumae

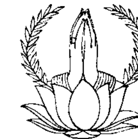
- *Senthanar*

PERIYA PURANAM

Ulahelaam Unarnthu ohtharku ariyavan
Nilavu ulaaviya neermali vheniyan
Alahil sohthiyan ampalathu aaduvaan
Malar silampadi vaazhthi vanangkuvaam

- *Sekhizhar*

Thiruchittampalam



Contents

Chapter 1

Aalaya Vazhipaadu
(Temple Worship)

Aalayam or Kovil is the place where God is graciously present. In the word Aalayam, 'Aa' stands for Atma (soul) and 'layam' stands for the place of linkage. In the word 'Kovil', 'Ko' denotes God and 'il' denotes Residence. Thus the place where the soul attains the lotus feet of the Lord is the temple.

In the word Aalayam, 'Aa' also refers to the fetter Aanava and 'layam' stands for subsiding. Hence, it can be understood that 'Aalayam' is the place where the Aanavamalam subsides.

Love and knowledge are essential aspects of life. Life is incomplete without these characteristics that originate from within God.

The Rajagopuram, the entrance of the temple, is found at great heights and is known as the 'Thulalingam'. It acts as a reminder of God to the people at distant places, and sins of the

people worshipping this would diminish. The Siva Ganas (Siva forces) surround us the moment we enter through the gopuram, and hence we have to follow certain 'Niyamas' (rules and regulations) while worshipping in a temple. Lord Siva can grow angry very quickly as well be pleased easily. Hence we should not involve ourselves in any prohibited activities, but worship with purity in body and mind.

As per the Agamas, the Dvajalingam / Kodimaram (flag pole) is the second amongst the Panchalingams. The Balipeedam and Nandhi are sanctified next to it. Balipeedam is the place where poojas are done for the Parivara Devas (retinue of the Supreme God).

We should not prostrate at any other places except before the Kodimaram. Here we prostrate to sacrifice our fetters and then meditate on the Lord. Men perform the 'Ashtanga Namaskaram', whereas women perform the 'Panchanga Namaskaram'.

People going to the temple for worship should take a coconut, fruits, betel leaves and areca nuts. The act of breaking a coconut into two halves in the Sannidhi symbolizes the action of getting rid of Maya, and being enlightened by the Supreme. The fruits denote our prayers, while the betel leaves denote the grace of Goddess Lakshmi.

When we touch the Aarathi with both our hands and then place them on our eyes, we think of God, receive His darshan, attain the feeling of having worshipped him, and thus become devoted towards him.

Aalaya Vazhipadu
Questions and Answers

*** Whether the Almighty can be worshipped only by going to the temple?**

The milk in the cow is present throughout its body, but only the udder provides the milk. The water is available beneath the ground, but to receive it we have to dig wells. The heat of the Sun will not burn a cloth unless the rays are passed through a prism. Why? This is because the prism converges the rays to a focal point. Hence, worshipping at other places is like a dhoti placed in sunlight, whereas temple worship is like a dhoti placed in sunlight under a prism. Like-wise, the Saints such as Nalvar, Alwar, Arunagirinaathar, Srimath Pamban Swamigal and other Vedic scholars attract the grace of God through Mantras and Yantras. Therefore worshipping in temples will burn our sins, and thus prevent rebirths. Hence, going to the temple is mandatory not only for the ordinary men, but also for saints too.

*** How to enter the temple?**

Aalayam is the place where the soul attains the lotus feet of the Lord. Besides, 'Aa' denotes the Aanavamalam and 'layam' refers to subsiding. Hence, Aalayam is the place where the Aanavamalam subsides. There are certain regulations for worshipping in a temple. It insists on purity of the mind and the body. Cleanliness of the body is attained through water, while purity of the mind is attained through righteous conduct. The Manam (mind), Vaakku (speech) and Kayam (body) have to be

pure while going to the temple. Hence, worshipping at the temple without cleanliness and righteousness is like consuming medicine without observing diet restrictions.

We have to either chant 'Siva Siva' or recite the Thevarams and Thiruvasakams to attain purity of the mind. While going to the temple and returning, we should meditate on the Lord and should not utter any unwanted words.

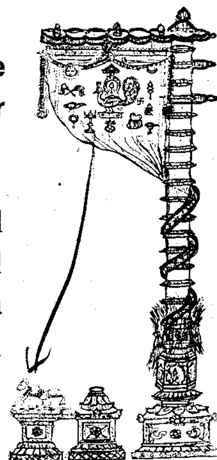
*** Why there is an Adhikara Nandhi in the temple?**

Though we wish to open a jewel box, it cannot be opened without the key. Like-wise, when going to the temple, it is necessary to worship the Adhikara Nandhi, as he is the key to Lord Siva. The Adhikara Nandhi is the first Guru of our Hindu religion. The word Nandhi means 'happiness', and it is a symbol of Dharma (righteousness).



*** What is the Philosophy of the Kodimaram (Flag pole) situated near the Nandhi?**

The Kodimaram is just like the spinal cord. There are 31 segments in our spinal cord, like-wise there are 31 segments in a kodimaram. The priest hoists the white cloth on the kodimaram with the rope entwined with dharpai, and while doing this he recites the Vedhic mantras.



The kodimaram is a symbol of Lord Siva, the rope is His grace, the cloth is our soul, and the dharpai denotes our fetters (Aanava, Kanma and Maya). Hence, hoisting the cloth and dharpai on the kodimaram symbolises the upliftment of our soul.

*** Explain the significance of the Balipeedam?**

The Balipeedam is also known as Badralingam. Next to this lies the mount of the main deity of the temple (ie. Nandhi in Siva temples). The mount represents the soul. The fetters found in the soul recedes behind the balipeedam. Hence, we have to sacrifice our Aanava, Kanma and Maya at the balipeedam, and then worship the deities.

*** How to worship near the Kodimaram?**

The women worship by performing the 'Panchanga Namaskaram', and the men worship by performing the 'Ashtanga Namaskaram'. We have to face either east or north while prostrating.

If the Sanctum Sanctorum is facing north or west, we prostrate on the left sideof the kodimaram, and if it is facing south or east we prostrate on the right side. We can prostrate 3, 5, 7, 9, or 12 times except during the time of Abishekams and Naivedhyams (offering food). We should not prostrate once or twice.

*** Give details of the Namaskarams?**

The Ashtanga Namaskaram is the way of prostration in which the forehead, ears (2), chest, hands (2) and legs (2) touch the floor.

The Panchanga Namaskaram is the way of prostration in which the forehead, hands (2) and knees (2) touch the floor.

Sashtanga Namaskaram means prostrating with the whole body touching the floor.

*** In temples why is primary importance given to Ganapathy Worship?**

Omkaram is the source of everything. The world originates from and ends in Omkaram. Ganapathy is the form of Omkaram.Hence, it is customary to worship the Pranavakara Ganapathy first, when you enter the temple.

*** What is the philosophy behind offering the coconut?**

The offering of coconut is to get rid of the three Malas (fetters). The husk of the coconut symbolizes Maya, the fibre we peel refers to Kanma, and the shell denotes Aanava. The white kernel inside reveals the divinity. Thus the philosophy of offering coconut is to get rid of the three Malas and attain Mukthi (Liberation).

*** Why we have to sing the Pancha Puranam?**

There are 11 mantras in Saivism namely; Easanam, Thatpuradam, Agoram, Vamadevam, Sathyajotham, Irudhyam, Sirasu, Sikai, Kavasam, Nettiram and Astiram. Nambiandar Nambi compiled 11 Thirumurais for those 11 mantras. A century after he passed away, Saint Sekhizhar composed the Periya Puranam (Siva Mantra and Panchatchara Mantra), which later became the 12th Thirumurai.

As we cannot recite everything at once, our ancestors compiled the Pancha Puranam. The Pancha Puranam consists of Thevaram, Thiruvasakam, Thiruvisaippa, Thirupallandu and Periya Puranam. Reciting the Pancha Puranam is equivalent to reciting all the twelve Thirumurais.

*** What are the benefits of worshipping the Navagrahas?**

The benefits of worshipping the Navagrahas (9 planets) are as follows:

Sun	-	Health, knowledge, strengthening of soul
Moon	-	Fame, willpower
Mars	-	Wealth, improves blood circulation, victory
Mercury	-	Education, knowledge
Jupiter	-	Respect, wealth
Venus	-	Beauty, joy, eloquence
Saturn	-	Happiness, activeness
Raghu	-	Free from the fear of enemies, success
Kethu	-	Wisdom, blessed with children, paves way to liberation

*** What is the purpose of celebrating festivals?**

The five functions of the Lord, ie. Creation, Protection, Destruction, Concealment, and Conferment of grace, are all implied through festivals. There are several vahanas (animal/bird/tree mounts) for the gods. During Temple festivals, the Utsava Vigrahas (deities) are carried on their mounts in a procession by the devotees. The God matures the Atma during these processions.

*** Explain the philosophy of Mount Karpaga Virutcham?**

The Lord is graciously present beneath the Mount Karpaga Virutcham (Tree). Like the root is the base of the tree, Lord Parameswara is the base of Creation. The branches and leaves of the tree signify innumerous living creatures. The seeds of the fruit denote the presence of the Lord in our souls.

*** Explain the philosophy of Mount Boodha?**

Boodha Vahanam is the symbol of 'Viruthi Krema Sankara Kolam'(destruction form). It reveals that the Almighty controls the body made up of Panchaboodhas (earth, water, fire, space, air).

*** What is revealed by Mount Kailasa?**

Lord Siva is graciously present at Mount Kailasa, which reveals to us that he is beyond Manam, Vaakku and Kayam. Once when Ravana, a symbol of Aanavam, tried to lift this mountain, Lord Siva pressed it gently with his feet. Ravana got caught beneath the mountain. Then he sang the Samagana, which pleased Lord Siva, and thus Ravana received a sword and a boon. This shows the gracefulness of God. It also emphasizes the fact that however cruel a person may be, on realization of his offences, the Almighty will forgive him and bless him.

*** Explain the philosophy of Mount Rishaba?**

During the Pralaya, the world was destroyed. The Dharma Devatha wanting to be immortal took the form of the Rishaba/ Nandhi (Bull). The Nandhi is the mount of Lord Siva and Parvathi. A symbol of strength, the four legs of the Nandhi represent

Sathyam, Dharmam, Shanthi and Premam. The Nandhi is white in colour symbolising purity. Like-wise, if the soul is purified, the Almighty will shower His grace upon us.

*** What is revealed through Mount Naga?**

The Naga (Cobra) conceals poison, gem and its hood, and exposes them whenever necessary, thus symbolising the function of Concealment.

*** What is the purpose of the Chariot festival?**

The Chariot festival indicates the destruction of Thiripuram, which implies getting rid of the three Malas.

*** Explain the philosophy of the Floating festival?**

The Lord saving the people from rebirths is denoted through the Floating festival.

*** Why only men opt for the life of Sanyasam (renunciation)?**

Sanyasam is giving up everything and moving towards the Almighty. When men renounce everything and move towards God, they become sanyasis. As women worship their husbands as God, they already practice a life of renunciation, and therefore, they do not need sanyasam.

*** Explain the significance of Vibhuthi (Sacred ash)? How is it worn?**

As the cow dung purifies dirt, the sacred ash purifies the impurities in our body. The sacred ash also reveals to us that everybody will be in the form of ashes one day.

The sacred ash is worn on 16 places by those who took Dheekshai. These are on the head, forehead, neck, chest, back, forearms (2) elbows (2) wrists (2), ribs (2), navel and knees (2). It can also be worn on 12 places excluding the forearms and wrists.

*** Why we wear the Uruthiratcham (Rudraksha beads)?**

There is a myth that the tears of Lord Siva turned into the Uruthiratcham. It is said that one who wears the Uruthiratcham will not suffer from any miseries. Also, recovery is faster when a small quantity of Uruthiratcham is taken along with medicine.

*** Why we wear Chanthanam and Kumkum?**

The Chanthanam reduces the body heat and refreshes us. Many nerves converge inbetween the eyebrows, and hence to avoid the generation of heat we wear Kumkum. It also symbolizes the third eye of Lord Siva.

*** Why Vaishnavas wear Naamam?**

Gopi Chanthanam (a type of sand) is used for 'Naamam'. Wearing the Naamam implies that ultimately all things turn into sand. Besides, Vaishnavites wear this as a symbol of Lord Vishnu's feet, to indicate that the human beings have no other destination other than the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu.

The Famous Saivite Temples in Sri Lanka

Thiruketheeswaram
(Mannar)

Thiruketheeswaram temple in Mannar district is a very ancient temple. The origin of the temple is beyond the scope of History and Archaeology. However, Epics and Puranas show some light into the period. In one of the Yugas, three pieces of Merumalai were thrown into the Southern Sea, one of which became Thiruketheeswaram. Mahaduvatta, the eldest son of Viswakarma, created a city here called Mahaduvattapuram, which later became known as Maathottam. At the centre of this town he built a Siva temple. Saint Thirunavukarasar uttered the name of this holy place as 'Thiruketheeswaram'. The songs of Thirugnanasambandar and Sundara Moorthy Nayanar sanctified this temple. Hence this sacred place is in itself a holy place.

Thirukoneswaram
(Trincomalee)

Thirukoneswaram is situated on a hill in the Northern seashore of Sri Lanka. This hill is otherwise known as Swamimalai. Dakshina Kailayam, Thirikoodam, Thenkaila Kaikesi are other names of this temple. The presiding deity at this temple is Koneswarar, and His consort is Maadhumai. The Punniya Theertham (temple tank) is known as Paavanaasam. The Sthala Virutcha (temple tree) is known as Kall Aal. The annual

festival of the temple commences with hoisting of the flag on Full moon day associated with the star Uthiram, and ends with Theertham on Thiruthiyai Thithi associated with the star Bharani. The songs of Thirugnanasambandar have sanctified the Thirukoneswaram Temple.

Muneeswaram
(Chillaw)

Silabam Muneeswaram is one amongst the Saivite temples in Sri Lanka. The presiding deity is Munnainaadhar, and His consort is Vadivaambikai. The punniya theertham is Mayavanaaru. This holy place is referred to as 'Alageswaram' in the 'Sanakumara Samhitha' of Sri Sivapuraanam.

This is also one amongst the 64 Sridevipeedas. Dakshina Kailasa Mahatmiyam relates this place to Ramayana and Mahabharatha. When Rama came to Sri Lanka and destroyed Ravana, he was possessed by the Brahmahathi Dhosha (an evil influence). While returning to Ayodhya in a Vimana, and when passing this place, he was relieved from the Brahmahathi Dhosha. Hence, he got down and took a sacred bath in the temple tank, and then worshipped Munnainadhar and Vadivaambikai.

Nakuleswaram
(Keerimalai)

In ancient times this holy place was known as Thiruthambaleswaram, but after Saint Nakula was blessed, it became known as Nakuleswaram. This Keerimalai Siva temple is situated on the banks of Sahara, the sacred river at the North

of Yazhpaanam (Jaffna). Moorthy, Punniya Theertham and Thalam sanctify this temple. At this place diseases are cured, wishes are fulfilled and we attain a peace of mind. The punniya theertham is known as Gangasamudra Sangamam or Kandaki Theertham. It is stated that Musukunda Chakravarthy, Sri Rama, and Arjuna have all taken sacred baths in this Theertham and worshipped Goddess Nakulambikai and Lord Nakuleswara to fulfill their wishes.

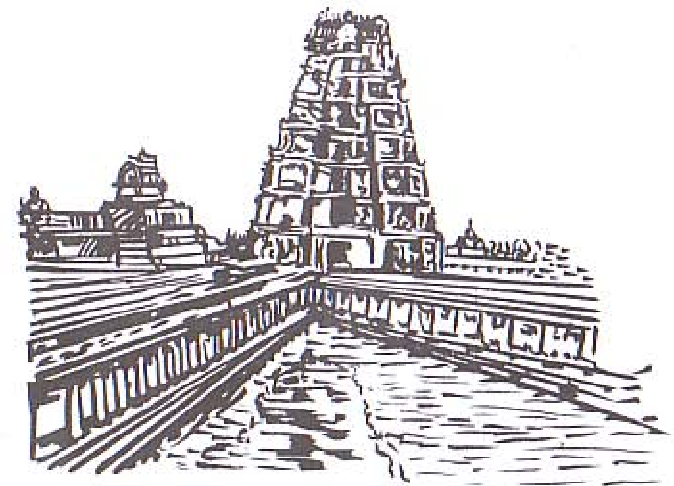
Maadhakal Mayilvakana Pulavar in his book 'Yazhpana Vaibhavamalai' stated that: "Once in Kriddha Yuga, Parameswara and Parvathi were graciously present at this hill. During this time, Lord Parameswara made the 'Kandaki Theertham' for Goddess Parvathi to take a sacred bath. Later, the celestial beings bathed there and became sacred. Hence this place is known as Punniyapuram. Once when both Musukunda Chakravarthy and Saint Nakula bathed in the Kandaki Theertham and worshipped Lord Siva, the mongoose face of Saint Nakula transformed back to his original face. From then onwards this place was called Nakulamalai. The Lord here is Naguleswaran and His consort is Nakulambikai. From this story, it is understood that the Keerimalai Siva temple is very ancient and sacred because the Theertham was brought to Earth by Lord Siva during the first Yuga." However, the Vakulagiri Puranam states a modified version. Here it says that a hunter, whom due to the curse of Rishi Sudhama, acquired the face of a mongoose. He took a sacred bath in this Theertham and got rid of the curse. The hunter is none other than Saint Nakula and since then this place is known as Nakulapuram.



Thiruketheeswaram *(Mannar)*

Thaanthonri Eeswarar - Kokkaticholai
(*Batticaloa*)

A Saint from India, on a pilgrimage to Kathirgamam, sat under a Kokatti tree and reached Samadhi. A Sivalingam appeared on its own at this place. This is the story believed by the people of this area. Inscriptions say that King Kulakottan did service to this temple and renovated it. The deity in this temple is called Kokatticholai Thaanthonreeswarar and the Goddess is Parvathi. The sacred tree related to this temple is the Kokatti tree. As the temple was constructed on the same spot from which the Sivalingam appeared, it was not very visible to the devotees. Hence an Uma Maheswarar statue was installed at this place for worship. Usually, temples are constructed in places selected by men, but this temple has the privilege of being chosen by God Himself, and thus has a special glory. The Thaanthonri Temple can never be shifted to another location.





Thirukoneswaram *(Thiruconalee)*



Muneeswaram *(Chilaw)*



Naguleswaram *(Keerimalai)*



Thanthonreeswaram *(Batticaloa)*

THE IDOLS OF THE LORDS

There is a misconception that only Hinduism has idol worship and superstitions. In Hinduism, the idols are not considered as Gods, but as philosophical symbols of the Lord. We bring up the images of those idols in our minds during meditation, and worship the Lord to get His blessings. While worshipping it is necessary to know the significance and glory of those idols.

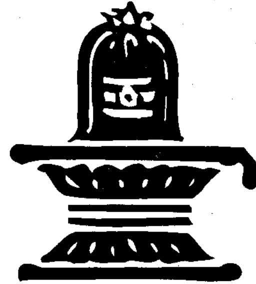
Vinayakar



In Hinduism, primary importance is given to Lord Vinayaka. The incarnation of Lord Vinayaka is to remove difficulties and obstacles. Hence, He is worshipped at the start of any rituals, events or journeys. We apply the same principle even in writing by putting the 'Pillaiyar Suzhi'(auspicious mark). The elephant face of Lord Vinayaka symbolizes Omkaram. He is the form of Gnana, and His mount is the mouse, which is clever and lively.

His big ears and belly reveal his omnipresence. The belly implies that he controls the entire universe. The ears like winnowing pan have Kundalams, which means that he listens to the grievances of his devotees and resolves them. Lord Vinayaka holds a Pasam, Angusam, a broken tusk and modhakams in His four hands, and carries a water pot with His trunk. They symbolize the five Sakthis (Para, Adhi, Ichcha, Gnana and Kiriya). The trunk of Lord Vinayaka is the symbol of grace, which lifts His devotees from drowning in the cycle of rebirths.

Sivalingam



The Sivalingam is the symbol of Siva worship. It is an illustration that has no beginning, no end, and no limit. It is generally mounted on a circular or quadrangular receptacle called the Avudaiyar (the symbol of Sakthi). This pedestal is designed with a Komuhai (on the left side to the Lingam) to drain off the water poured during abishekams. The square base of the pedestal represents 'Brahma', the octagonal shape in the middle denotes 'Vishnu', and the upper oval shape symbolizes 'Siva'.

The Avudaiyar and the Lingam embedded in it imply that the world originated due to the fusion of Siva and Sakthi.

The Sivalingam also symbolizes that which is invisible yet omnipresent. This indicates that even the formless is eligible to take a form. The philosophy of the Sivalingam is that Lord Siva confers grace on the soul in the forms of both 'Aruvam' (formless) and 'Uruvam' (form).

Natarajar



The dancing image of the Supreme Being, Natarajar, gives us bliss at sight. The idol of Natarajar not only possesses artistic features, but its uniqueness lies in the religious philosophies found in it. The Natarajar form symbolizes the five functions of Lord Siva.

The radiant, calm and divine beauty embodied in the sacred face of Lord Natarajar reveals his love and grace towards the soul. The dancing idol of Lord Shiva with 'Viriththa Senchadai' (reddish hair swaying freely in the air) gives us divine bliss.

The crescent Moon found on His head indicates His tenderness towards His devotees. The body of Natarajar is coral red colour. This coral red colour signifies fire, and also indicates that God purifies the true devotees surrendering unto Him to merge with Him.

The upper right hand holds the Damaru (Drum), the sound (Nadham) from which the Universe evolved, thus symbolizing *Creation.*

The fire held in the upper left hand symbolises *Destruction.*

The other right hand holding the Abhaya mudra denotes that in his presence there is no need to fear, and that *His grace* is always there.

His raised left foot symbolizing *Protection* is the one he uses to bless the souls. This foot belongs to Sakthi, His consort.

The right foot is pressed gently against the demon Muyalagan (who has an ignorant and forgetful nature). It is important to note, that He presses his foot very gently so that the demon is not destroyed but controlled, thus indicating *Concealment.* The demon is the symbol of the soul's fetters Aanava, Kanma and Maya.

The lower left hand, depicting the trunk of an elephant, symbolizes the removal of obstacles, and hence implies that Lord Ganesha is omnipresent.

The image/idol of Lord Natarajar should face south in all places. It is said that the Lord facing south ensures that Yama does not destroy the Atma without justice.

Brahma



Brahma is the god of Creation. It is said that He was born out of the navel of Lord Vishnu. His consort is Goddess Saraswathi (goddess of Education), He is a four-faced God seated on a lotus. He carries a Kamandalam (water pot), Vedhas (Hindu Manuscript), Suruvam (a sacrificial implement) and an Uruthiratchamala in his four hands. The lotus in which he sits denotes the truthful nature. The four hands represent the inbuilt qualities of mankind namely Manam (mind), Chiddham (consciousness), Buddhi (intellect) and Ahankaram (ego). The four faces represent the four Vedhas. He wears the hide of a deer and His mount is the Hamsa (swan).The idol of Brahma is rarely found in the temples of our country.

Vishnu



Lord Vishnu is the god of Protection. He rests in "Yogic sleep" on a great serpent bed, protected by its hood in Vaikuntham.His consort Goddess Lakshmi (goddess of Wealth) resides at His feet serving him. He represents the power of Sustenance, He is blue in colour and dressed in yellow. He has four hands in which he carries a Sangu (conch), a Chakra (discus), a Gadai (mace) and a Lotus.

Lord Vishnu is the one who manifests himself as Lord Narayana in the world, among mankind, to rid life of its evil tendencies.

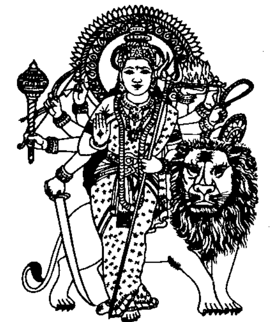
Aadhiparasakthi



The source and sustenance of all creation is Sakthi (energy). In Hindu literature, the energy is always portrayed as a female deity. Each member of the Trinity has a Sakthi as His consort. (Parvathi for Siva, Lakshmi for Vishnu, and Saraswathi for Brahma).

Durga confers on us the physical, mental and spiritual powers. Lakshmi endows us with all kinds of wealth. Saraswathi gives us the power of knowledge. All three Divinities come and merge into our Mother "Sarva Sakthi Swarupini", whom we call Aadhiparasakthi.

Durga



Durga is the goddess of courage, strength and power. She is the consort of Lord Siva, and her mount is the lion. In her hands she holds the Soolam (trident), Kadgam (sword), Sarngam (bow) and Ambu (arrow), Chakram (discus), Gadai (mace), Vel (spear), Pasam (cord), and Sangu (conch). She slayed the buffalo demon Mahishasuran on the ninth day of battle, which is celebrated as Navarathri.

Lakshmi



Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth, fortune and beauty. She is the consort of Lord Vishnu, and her mount is the garuda (hawk). She sits on a pink lotus carrying two lotuses, a pot of gold and holds an Abhaya mudra. Her four hands signify the four aims of life, Dharma, Wealth, Pleasure and Liberation.

Saraswathi

Saraswathi is the goddess of knowledge, wisdom and purity. She is the consort of Lord Brahma, and her mount is the swan. She sits on a white lotus carrying the veena, a sacred scripture, and a rosary. Her four hands signify the four qualities of mankind, mind, intellect, consciousness and ego.

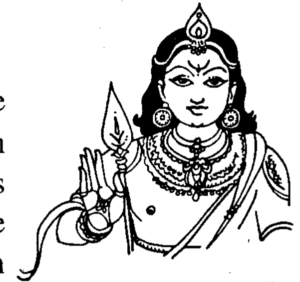


Hanuman

Hanuman is the monkey god of courage and strength, and is endowed with immense powers. He is the son of Vayu (god of Wind) and Anjana. He is a popular character in the Ramayana, known for his loyalty and selfless service. He is the most faithful devotee of Lord Rama. He is a master of Vedhas and a great scholar, and remained a celibate throughout his life.



Thirumurugan



Lord Muruga is considered to be the natural God of Tamils. The eighteen eyes on his six faces refer to the eighteen consonants of the Tamil alphabet. The six faces symbolize Vallinam (6 hard consonants), Mellinam (6 soft consonants) and Edaiyinam(6 medial consonants). The twelve shoulders denote the 12 vowels, and the spear (Vel) in his hand is the symbol of 'Ayudha Ezhuthu' (ஃ – the guttural letter). Gnanam (Wisdom), Ishwaryam (Wealth), Azhaghu (Beauty), Veeram (Bravery), Vairakkiyam (Perseverance) and Pughazh (Fame) are also symbolised by his six faces facing six directions.

The 'Namasivaya' together with the 'Omkaram' are also symbolized through His six faces.

He holds the holy 'Vel' of Gnanasakthi, which is his power to vanquish darkness.

His mount is the peacock. The peacock, in the form of 'Pranavam', is able to control powerful snakes. The cock on the flag is the symbol of victory. The beautiful Lord Muruga reflects youthfulness, sweetness, knowledge and beauty. His two consorts are Valli (Ichcha Sakthi) and Deyvanai (Kiriya Sakthi). Our ancestors constructed the Murugan temples on hills, and hence he is worshipped as "Kundru thorum Murugan".

Arthanareeswarar

Arthanareeswarar is one of the 'Maheswara Moorthams' of Lord Siva. In the word Arthanareeswarar, 'Artha' means 'the Half', 'Nari' means 'women', and 'Eswar' refers to the 'Lord'. In the

Arthanareeswarar form, Lord Siva occupies one half while Sakthi occupies the other half. The fusion of Siva and Sakthi is reflected in this form. The Arthanareeswarar form in Saivism reflects the uniting of both men and women.



There is a story about this form: "Once when Lord Siva and Goddess Sakthi were graciously present in Kailasam, they were worshipped by Attadhikbalars, saints and celestial beings.

There was one sage 'Brinki', who worshipped Lord Siva as the ultimate Supreme Power. He worshipped Lord Siva alone by going around him and not Sakthi. Thus, Sakthi grew angry and cursed the sage to become a skeleton, and that he be drained of all his energy.

Lord Siva pitied the sage and blessed him with another leg to withstand his skeletal form. The sage's joy knew no bounds, while it made the goddess furious. Hence, she reached the ashram of Sage Gautama on Earth and sat under a Bael tree. She explained her anger to Gautama and asked him for a suggestion to ensure the worship of Lord Siva with Sakthi.

Sage Gautama told Goddess Sakthi "Oh Mother! The observance of the austerity Kedhara Gowri will fulfill your wish". Goddess Sakthi observed the Kethara Gowri austerity and acquired a boon from Lord Siva, and so she merged with Him and thus together they became Arthanareeswarar."

In the Arthanareeswarar Moorthy, the right side has the characteristics of Lord Siva, while the left side has the characteristics of Goddess Sakthi.

FASTING

"Fasting (Viratham) is the way of worshipping God with true devotion through our Manam (mind), Vaakku (speech) and Kayam (body)" said Navalar Peruman. Fasting is observed to meditate on the Lord, and to also control our minds by restraining our senses. Controlling the food is a way of controlling the mind, and hence people fast.

Fasting is generally observed according to Thithis (Lunar days) and Stars . These are generally observed for Ganesha, Siva, Sakthi, Vishnu, Murugan and Soorya (Sun).

Viratha Niyamas (Observing fasts)

It is a must to get up early, take a bath, wear clean clothes, and perform daily rituals like the Sandhya Vandhanam (pg.54). The significant features of these fasts are going to the temple, wearing the Uruthiratchamala, lighting the lamp in the pooja room, performing pooja with flowers and reciting the Thirumurais.

Generally, while observing fasts, people fast in the morning, eat in the afternoon and then have a cup of milk or a fruit at night.

Vegetables such as onion, garlic, drumstick and bottle-gourd should be avoided as they stimulate the character of Thamas.

While observing fasts, it is necessary to do charity, give food to devotees, speak loving words and be affectionate towards everybody.

FASTS and FESTIVALS

Hinduism and human life are both closely related to each other. The festival serves as an opportunity to cultivate devotion. During festivals people come together for celebrations, and thus unity is developed. During preparations everyone adjusts with, respect and motivate each other. Moreover festivals refresh, exhilarate and bloom us.

The Month of Thai *(Mid-January to Mid-February)*

Thai Pongal *(Season's first harvest)*

Thai Pongal is celebrated on the 1st of the Thai month. On this day, the Sun God is honoured as the 'Giver of all good fortunes'. The pongal (sweet rice) is offered to the Sun at the time of sunrise. Thai Pongal is also celebrated as the festival of Farmers.

People get up early in the morning, take a bath, draw kolams, keep a niraikudam, betel leaves and areca nuts, fruits, coconuts, flowers and a Vinayakar model (made out of turmeric) at the entrance. The chakkarai pongal is then cooked in a pot at the entrance and offered to the Sun, and then Thevarams are recited. If cooking at the entrance is not possible, then it can be cooked in the kitchen and offered to the Sun.

The pot is decorated by tying ginger and turmeric plants around it. The pongal pot is filled with milk and water and placed over the fire by the eldest family member.

The overflow of the boiling milk is considered auspicious for the coming year, especially if it spills on the east side first.

The newly harvested rice and moong dhal mixture are taken by both hands and rotated over the pot three times, and then dropped into the pot. This process is repeated three times. Afterwards the remaining mixture is added. When the pongal is cooked it is served on three Thalaivazhai ilaigal (banana leaves). Then a banana is peeled and placed over each pongal with a little ghee, curd and honey. Finally the Sun God is worshipped with dhoopa dheepa pooja.

One should have a head bath to rid themselves of miseries on the day of Pongal. Oil baths should not be taken on the day of Thai Pongal. People working in our houses should be gifted with new clothes.

Chakkarai Pongal (sweet rice)

Raw red rice 500g
Roasted split moong dhal 100g
Milk 1/2 litre
Chakkarai 400g
Cardamom powder 1tsp
Coconut milk (extracted from 1 coconut)
Ghee 100g
Cashew nuts and raisins



Boil milk and water in a pot. When it is boiling, add the mixture of rice and moong dhal into it. When it is almost cooked, add coconut milk, chakkarai, cardamom powder, cashew nuts and raisins (roasted in ghee) and stir frequently until done.

Maattu Pongal

People show their gratitude towards the cattle, especially the cow, by celebrating 'Maattu Pongal'. Though the Agamas do not state any message about this Pongal, it is observed in practice. Cows are bathed, their horns are sharpened and painted, and they are decorated with turmeric, kumkum, chanthanam and garlands. The pongal is cooked in the cowshed and then offered to the cows.

Thaipoosam

This festival falls on the star Poosam after Pongal, and is celebrated for both Lord Siva and Lord Murugan. As this is an auspicious day, people perform the ear - piercing ceremony and Anna prasanam (feeding the baby cooked rice for the first time). It is very important to go to the temple and pray to the Lord on this day. Kavadi's are carried around in Murugan temples on this day.

Thai Amavaasai

This is the New moon day on which Goddess Abhirami blessed Abhiramipattar by showing a Full moon. It is a good day to observe this fast for our ancestors.

The Month of Maasi ***(Mid-February to Mid-March)***

Maasi Magam

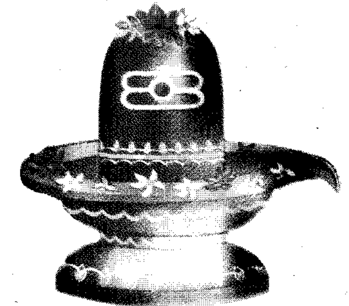
When the Chandran (Moon) enters the Simma Rasi (Zodiac Leo) with the star Magam in the month of Maasi, the festival of 'Maasi Magam' is celebrated. When the Jupiter also enters the Simma Rasi, it becomes 'Maga Magam', which

is more auspicious. The `Maga Magam' is celebrated once in twelve years at the Kumbakonam Mamangheswarar temple in Tamil Nadu.

This fast is very auspicious to Sakthi, and when people observe this they will be free of rebirths. When women observe this and do Annadhaanam, they will be blessed with a son. This is also the day on which Sakthi incarnated as the daughter of Takkan.

Sivarathri

The Sivarathri fast is compulsorily observed by Saivites, the devotees of Lord Siva. This fast is observed on 'Theipirai Chathurdhasi' (the day before the New moon) in the Maasi month. Fasting is a must on this day, and people worship the Lord throughout the night without sleeping. The Supreme Being without Adhi (beginning) and Antha (end) is revealed through Sivarathri. The devotees who worship with true devotion will receive the grace of the Lord on this day. The night is spent by going to the temple, worshipping Lord Siva, chanting the Panchatcharam, and reciting the Thirumurais. Those who cannot fast can drink milk or water. The people fasting have to perform their morning rites and do paaranam along with a Siva devotee. After paaranam one should not sleep during the day.



Paaranam – Eating before 8.30am the day after fasting.

The Month of Panguni *(Mid-March to Mid-April)*

Panguni Uthiram

This festival is celebrated on the Full moon day associated with the star Uthiram. This festival is auspicious for both Lord Muruga and Lord Siva. The Mother of the Universe, Aadhiparasakthi had incarnated as the daughter of Malaiarasan and married Lord Siva on this day. Hence, it is called 'Kalyana Sundara Viratham'. On this day 'Seetha Kalyanam' also took place.

Panguni Thingal

This fast is observed in the month of Panguni on Mondays. This is auspicious to Sakthi

The Month of Chithirai *(Mid-April to Mid-May)*

Chithirai's New Year day

This is the period when the Sun enters the Mesha Rasi (Zodiac Aries). This is the first month for the Tamil people. Puranas state that 'Brahma started creation on this day, and hence we celebrate this day as New Year day.'



To get rid of sins, people take a head bath with a little Maruthuneer (water mixed with herbs, flowers etc.) brought from the temple. On this day people wear new clothes, perform pooja, and offer pongal to the Sun God who confers grace on the world.

They go to the temple and get blessings from the priest and elders. It is a customary to take pachadi (sambal made from flower of Neem and sugar) with our food.

Chithira Pournami

This is the Full moon day on which those who have lost their mothers observe fasting, so that her soul lies in peace.

The Month of Vaikasi *(Mid-May to Mid-June)*

Vaikasi Visakam

This is the day of incarnation of Lord Muruga in Saravana Poigai. Lord Muruga protected Dharma for the welfare of the whole world by destroying the Asuras and protecting the Devas.

The Vaikasi Visakam falls on a Full moon day. Vasanthotsavam and Brahmotsavam are celebrated in temples. Namalvar was born on this day. Buddha was born, got wisdom and attained Mukthi on this day, and hence Vesak is celebrated. The Puranas reveal that when Vaikasi Visakam associated with Chathurdhasi falls on a Tuesday, it is auspicious to Yamadharmaraja.

The Month of Aani *(Mid-June to Mid-July)*

Aani Uthiram

Abishekam for Lord Nataraja is performed on Aani Uthiram. The abishekams take place on six different days every year. These days are: Chithirai Thiruvonam, Aavani Valarpirai Chathurdhasi (waxing moon), Purattasi Valarpirai Chathurdhasi, Masi Valarpirai Chathurdhasi, Aani Uthiram and Marghazhi

Thiruvadhirai. The abishekams for Aani Uthiram and Marghazhi Thiruvadhirai are performed early morning with darshan. On the other four days the abishekams are performed in the afternoon with darshans in the evening.

The Month of Aadi *(Mid-July to Mid-August)*

Aadi Pirappu

The essential grains are sown in the month of Aadi, while auspicious events are not celebrated during this month. There is a saying that "Oru Aadi Kalanginaal, Ezhu Aadi Kalanga Vendum", which means that "If we suffer for one Aadi, we will have to suffer for seven Aadis". Aadi Kool and kozhukattai are consumed on this day.

Aadi Kool (Porridge)

Roasted split moong dahl 1/4 cup
Roasted rice flour 1/2 cup
Coconut milk 3 cups
Coconut pieces
Jaggery 3/4 cup
Salt

Boil the moong dahl and strain it. Mix the rice flour with coconut milk, and then add the moong dahl and cook. When it is cooked, add jaggery, coconut pieces and a pinch of salt and stir. Serve hot.

Aadi Chevaai

Unmarried girls observe fasting on the Tuesdays of the Aadi month, and then go to the temple for Amman Darshan to be blessed

with an early marriage. There is a saying that "Aadi Chevaai Thedi Pidithaal, Naadiya Kanavan Veedu Varuvan", which means that "If you fast on Aadi Chevaai, your ideal husband will come to your doorstep."

Those who have Chevaai dhoshams should observe fasting on this day commencing from the first Tuesday of the month of Aadi.

Aadi Amavaasai

This New moon day is auspicious for performing 'Pidhirkadan'. Those who have lost their fathers, fast on this day and dc charity. According to the Agamas, those without fathers should perform these rites by the seashore with a priest. Here they have to offer sesame seeds, water and dharpai. This is done to our forefathers for their souls to rest in peace. It is a must for them to observe fasting on every Amavaasai (New moon day).

Aadi Pooram

There is a myth that the Mother of the Universe, Goddess Uma, attained puberty on this day. Hence, it is auspicious to observe this fast and get Ambaal darshan. Eight kinds of Siddhis can be attained by worshipping on this day. It is more auspicious when Aadi Pooram falls on a Friday.
Siddhis - spiritual powers for the control of self, others and the forces of nature.

The Month of Aavani *(Mid-August to Mid-September)*

Aavani Gnaayiru

Astrology regards Aavani as 'Simma Maadham'. The Sun enters the Simma Rasi during this month, thus Sundays become

auspicious. It is believed that our wishes are fulfilled when we fast and worship the Sun God on Sundays.

Aavani Chathurthi



This is the fourth day after Amavaasai in the month of Aavani. Lord Vinayaka incarnated on this day. We fast in the morning and go to the temple in the evening. Lord Vinayaka is worshipped by offering arugampul, modhakam and pongal.

The story of the Naankaam Pirai

On the Chathurthi day (fourth day after Aavani Amavaasai), Chandran (Moon) was amused and laughed at the sight of Vinayaka's big belly, the holes in his trunk, and his hand carrying modhakams. Lord Vinayaka grew angry and cursed the Moon that those who see him on this day would face trials and tribulations. Hence, it is not good to see the Moon on the fourth day after Amavaasai in the month of Aavani.

Aavani Moolam

Sundareswarar (Lord Siva) arrived in Madurai on this day to bless Saint Manickavasagar. Once, King Pandiya imprisoned Manickavasagar for spending all the money on a Siva temple instead of buying the horses he was told to. Hence, Lord Siva came and saved him by transforming all the foxes

into horses. This day was on the star Moolam in the month of Aavani. Hence, this day is celebrated as a festival.

The Month of Purattasi *(Mid-September to Mid-October)*

Purattasi Sani

This day is very auspicious to Lord Saneeswara. The austerities observed for Lord Saneeswara on Purattasi Saturdays are more beneficial than any other Saturdays. For the soul to be rid off sins and attain liberation, sesame seeds are tied in a black cloth, dipped in gingelly oil, and then burnt in a clay pot at the temple. Offering food to crows is a must, because it is His mount. Taking loans are not allowed on this day, and one should not wear torn clothes.

Maalayam/Makalayam

Makalaya Patcham is the waning period of the moon (ie. period from Full moon to New moon day) in the month of Purattasi. Those who cannot perform rites to their forefathers every month should perform charities during this month as an alternative. There is a myth that during the zodiac Kanni, our forefathers come to Earth to visit their families. This visit is known as Makalayam.

Maasiyam

The rites performed to a dead person every month during the first year is known as Maasiyam. The ceremonies are performed on the same Thithi on which the pidhir passed away.

Navarathri *(Nine nights)*



The period of nine days and nights when Sakthi fought and slayed the demon Mahishasuran is celebrated as Navarathri. This festival is celebrated in the month of Purattasi, commencing on the Prathamai Thithi (day after New moon) until the Navami Thithi (ninth day of waxing moon period). Devi is the presiding deity for this festival, and she is worshipped in the form of a kumbam.

This festival is celebrated for nine days by worshipping the Devis. The presiding deity during the first three days is Durga (Goddess of courage), followed by Mahalakshmi (Goddess of wealth) for the next three days, and then finally Saraswathi (Goddess of knowledge) during the last three days.

Idols of Hindu gods, goddesses, mythological characters, animals etc. are displayed on a row of steps, and is called 'Golu Padigal'. The number of steps, on which the dolls are arranged, are usually in odd numbers. The Golu is arranged on Amavaasai (New moon day), and it lasts for 10 days until the Vijayadhasami day. On the ninth day, Saraswathi pooja is celebrated. On this day, books and musical instruments are kept in the shrine room and poojas are performed.

The tenth day is Vijayadhasami, and it is considered a day of victory as it is the day on which Sakthi slays the demon. Vijayadhasami is an auspicious day to begin new ventures (ie. business, education etc.) because it assures one of success. Learning the art of music and dancing are commenced on this day, and children are also taught their first alphabet.





Kethara Gowri Viratham



This fast is observed for 21 days from Purattasi Valarpirai Navami to Aipasi Theipirai Chathurdhasi. Goddess Uma observed this fast to merge with Lord Siva into the Arthanareeswarar form. Hence, it is termed the Kethara Gowri Viratham. Both married and unmarried women observe this. Married women observe it for the well-being of their husbands, whereas unmarried women observe it to be blessed with a good husband. Even men observe this fast to lead a prosperous life.

A yarn with 21 plies is taken, and we tie a knot everyday for 21 days. On the final day, the priest in the temple ties this knotted kaappu on the right hand for men and the left hand for women. During this fast, food is consumed only in the evenings (after sunset) for the first twenty days, and then on the 21st day complete fasting is observed. Paaranam is done the following morning (before 8.30am). Any one of the items; adhirasam, ellurundai, betel leaves and areca nuts, bananas or coconuts is offered each day as 'Naivethyam' during the 21 days.

The Month of Aipasi *(Mid-October to Mid-November)*

Dheepavali *(Dheepam - oli)*

Dheepavali is celebrated as the festival of lights. This was the day on which Lord Krishna destroyed the demon Narahasuran with the help of Sathyabama. This implies that the Lord destroyed Adharma with Dharma.

Dheepams are placed in a row during this festival, and crackers are lighted. People wear new clothes and worship the Almighty. Dheepavali always falls on the day preceeding the New moon day in the month of Aipasi.

Kanda Sashti

Kanda Sashti starts on the day after New moon day in the month of Aipasi. Kanda Sashti is celebrated for six days. This is the time during which Lord Muruga fought and slayed the demon Surapadman. Devotees of Lord Muruga fast on all six days, and drink only water. They take food only on the seventh day, with a Saivist. Those who cannot fast for all six days, have one meal a day during the first five days and then fast completely on the sixth day. Paaranam is done the following morning. The Sashti Viradham has to be observed continuously for 12 yrs.



Puranas state that this was also the day on which Lord Siva made both Brahma and Vishnu realize His Supremacy during their dispute over their own Supremacy.

Aipasi Velli

Fridays of the month Aipasi are considered more auspicious than any other Fridays.

The Month of Karthigai *(Mid-November to Mid-December)*

Karthigai Thingal

Monday is the day of the Moon and is termed Somavaram. Somavara Viradham is the most auspicious of all the Siva Viradhams. On Somavara day, the Chandran got the blessing of being worn on Lord Siva's head. This fast is observed on Mondays by fasting throughout the day. At sunset they offer pongal (made out of raw rice) and fruits to Lord Siva and then consume it as prasadham.

Karthigai Dheepam

This is celebrated on the Full moon day associated with the star Karthigai. Once, the Devas, blessed by Lord Siva, became arrogant and haughty. Therefore, Lord Siva appeared before them as an old man, planted a Thumbai plant, and then asked them to uproot it. All the Devas failed the task and soon realized their mistake. Hence, Lord Siva blessed them all in the form of light.

Vinayaka Sashti Viratham

This is observed for 21 days, commencing from Krishna Patcha Prathamai (the day after Full moon) of the Karthigai month, to Sukla Patcha Sashti (sixth day after New moon). The kaappu (band comprising of 21 plies) is tied by a priest on the right hand for men and left hand for women. This austerity is observed by having one meal a day during the first 20 days, and then fasting completely on the 21st day. Paaranam is done the following morning.

The Month of Margazhi *(Mid - December to Mid -January)*

Thiruvampavai



This is considered 'early morning' for the Devars (celestial beings), and hence it is more significant to recite the Thirupalli Ezhuchi and Thiruvampavai (morning prayers) during this month. This festival is auspicious for Lord Siva, and it symbolizes His five functions.

The Thiruvampavai festival is celebrated for nine days. The tenth day is Thiruvadhirai.

Thiruvadhirai

This is also a significant day for Lord Siva. This auspicious Viradham is observed in Marghazhi on the star Thirvadhirai, and Lord Siva is known as Adhiraiyan. People observe fasting and go to the temple for Arudhara darshan on this day. This festival is famous in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu (India).

Vaikunda Ekadhasi

Vaikunda Ekadhasi falls on the eleventh day after New moon day in the month of Margazhi. This is significant to Lord Vishnu. Devotees observe fast and worship Vishnu throughout the night. In Vishnu temples, the main entrance gate is opened on this day, and aspirants enter the temple. This symbolizes the entrance into Vaikuntha (Heaven).

Sukkiravara Viratham

This is observed on Fridays throughout the Year. Though the presiding deity is Lord Muruga, Sakthi and Ganapathy are also worshipped.

Prathosa Viradham

This Viradham is observed on Thirayothasi Thithi, the thirteenth day of both the waxing moon and waning moon, seeking Siva's grace.

The Puranas narrate the following story of a Siva's miracle:

"During the Kurmo Avatar, both the Devas and Asuras used the mountain Meru as a maththu, and the snake Vasuki as a rope, to churn the Thiruparkadal (milky ocean). Their intention was to drink the Amirtham (nectar) produced and become immortal. While churning, the Vasuki spurted poison into the sea. Seeing this, the Devas and Asuras seeked Lord Siva at Mount Kailas and surrendered to Him. Hence, in order to save them, Lord Siva consumed the poison and told them to continue churning the milky ocean. On the dawn of Thuvadhasi day (twelfth day), Amirtham appeared, and all rejoiced. The following day, Thirayodhasi day (thirteenth day), they went to Lord Siva and asked for forgiveness. Lord Siva pardoned them with His grace. In the evening, Lord Siva danced in between the horns of the Idabam (Nandhi). The Devas were fortunate to get a glimpse of this, and hence were blessed. The Puranas state that the time of this dance performance was during the Prathosa kalam (between 4.30pm and 6 pm).

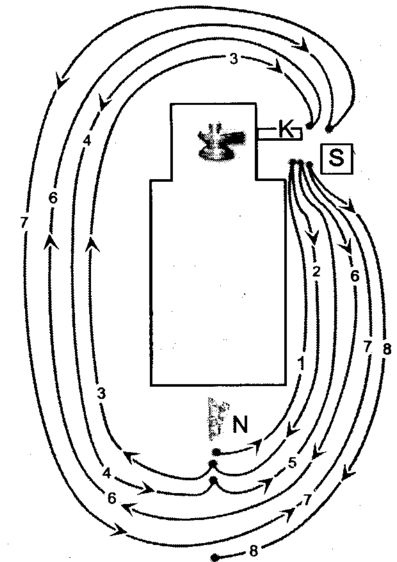
Special poojas are conducted during this time in Siva temples. Lamps with ghee are lit before the Nandhi and Lord Siva. Red rice, and a garland made from arugampul are offered to the Nandhi.

After the poojas, the idol of Lord Siva is carried around the inner premises of the temple three times in a procession led by the Musicians. In the first round the Nadhaswaram is played, in the second round the Vedha Parayanam is recited, and in the third round the Panniru Thirumurais are recited.

There is a special routine by which Lord Siva should be worshipped during the Prathosa kalam (ie. without crossing the Komuhai). It is customary to worship Him in this way at the Siva temple. Food is consumed only in the evening after the pooja. Those who worship Lord Siva on this day are excused for not worshipping him on other days.

The method of worshipping Siva during the Prathosa kalam

Pray to Nandhi first, then turn right (anticlockwise direction) and go to the Sandeswarar and pray. Return the same way and pray to the Nandhi. Then turn left (clockwise direction) and go up to the Komuhai. Return the same way and pray to the Nandhi. Turn right again and go to the Sandeswarar and pray. Return the same way, but without stopping at the Nandhi, carry on up to the Komuhai. Then turn around and go all the way back to the Sandeswarar and pray. Finally, return the same way to the Nandhi and get a glimpse of Lord Siva inbetween the horns of the Nandhi.



N - Nandhi
S - Sandeswarar
K - Komuhai

Chapter 2

Ceremonies
(Birth to Death)

Childhood

31st day of birth

The first ceremony of the baby is conducted on the 31st day of birth. The first 31 days are considered as defilement (Thudakku), hence the baby should not be taken out until the 31st day. This is the day to remove the defilement of the baby. On this day, the house is washed and everyone takes a head bath. A Niraikudam is placed at the entrance (see

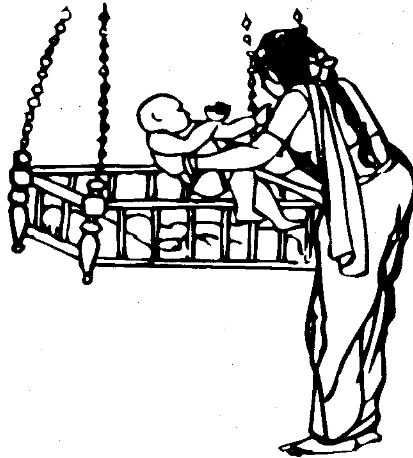


pg.155), and the priest is invited home to perform the pooja. He will face the east, and the following things should be placed before him:

A plantain leaf, a large salver, paddy or raw rice, coconuts, mango leaves, arugampul, a lamp, oil, wick, garlands, flowers, sacred ash, chanthanam, turmeric, kumkum, rose water, image of Vinayaka, betel leaves and areca nuts, lime, fruits, sugar candy (katkandu), a bunch of bananas, camphor and camphor plate, incense sticks, gumbenzoin.

First, the priest performs Punniyavasanam and sprinkles the pooja water all over the house, thus symbolizing the removal of the defilement. It is also customary to name the child on this day, after the defilement is removed.

Nama Karanam ***(Naming the baby)***



Nama Karanam is the first ceremony conducted for a newborn baby. The baby's head is shaved, and then the priest performs pooja stating the birth star of the baby. The baby is then placed on the lap of the maternal uncle (or eldest family member), and the name is uttered three times into the baby's ears. The baby is fed sugar candy water to be blessed with a sweet life by the grace of God. Then the parents and relatives utter the name into the baby's ears and bless the baby.

Dhrishti pottu ***(Black bindhi)***

100g Sago is roasted in a pan until it turns black. Then it is boiled in water with flowers (ie. jasmine) for fragrance. This is then filtered through a thin cloth into a coconut shell (or a bowl) and left to dry. The black residue is later made into a paste by mixing with a little water. This black paste is worn as a bindhi on the baby. Hindus believe that this black bindhi wards off the evil eyes cast on the baby.

41st day of birth

On the 41st day, the mother takes the baby to the temple. The following archanai (pooja) products should be taken: betel leaves and areca nuts, fruits, coconut, flowers, and incense sticks. The baby is placed before the Sanctum Sanctorum, and an archanai is done on the name and birth star of the baby.

Karna Vedhanam ***(Ear - piercing ceremony)***



The ear-piercing ceremony is done for the removal of 'Aritta Dhosham' (evil influence), and also for beautification. This is conducted on the 6, 7, 8 or 10th month of the child.

An idol of Vinayaka, and a niraikudam are placed near the child. The goldsmith is invited home to pierce the child's ears, and then earrings are worn. Poojas/Kiriyas are not necessary for this ceremony. It is auspicious to conduct this ceremony on Thai Poosam day.

Chorootal *(Feeding cooked rice for the first time)*

Rice is fed for the first time on an auspicious day. For boys it is done on the 6, 8, 10 or 12th month (even-numbered month), whereas for girls it is done on the 5, 7, 9 or 11th month (odd-numbered month).

A lamp is lit, Lord Vinayaka is worshipped, and chakkarai pongal (sweet rice) is offered to the Lord. Then the father feeds the pongal to the child three times. Then all the relatives feed the child and bless him/her for a long and healthy life. Since it is the first meal for the child, the pongal is fed using a gold ring/spoon.



Teething

It is necessary to prepare 'Pallu kozhukattai' (a sweet) when the first tooth appears for the child. The child is placed on a white cloth, and another white cloth is put over his/her head (see picture). A Vinayakar idol made out of turmeric, and a lighted lamp are placed before the child. Either nine or eleven kozhukattais are kept on the child's head by the maternal uncle and aunt. They then feed it to the child. This ceremony is performed to get the blessings of the Lord.





Kozhukattai

Rice flour 1 cup
Steamed wheat flour 3 tbsp
Roasted green grams 100g
Cardamom powder 1/4 tsp
Chakkarai 100g
Grated coconut 1/2 cup
Pieces of coconut
Salt

The roasted green gram is boiled and then strained. When it is dry, chakkarai, grated coconut, and cardamom powder are added and mixed well. Then the rice flour, wheat flour and a pinch of salt are mixed together and kneaded well by adding hot water. This dough is made into small cup shapes and filled with the green gram mixture. They are then folded and the edges are pressed, like patties. The edges are decorated with the pieces of coconut (symbolizing the tooth) and then steamed (see picture).

Ehdu Thodakkuthal
(Education)



This is usually done at the age of three. It is customary to start education on an auspicious day during an auspicious time. This can be on Vijayadhasami day (Navarathri), Thaipoosam day, or an auspicious day between the months of Thai and Aani according to the star of the child.

The 'Ehdu Thodakkuthal' is usually performed at the temple. The archanai products; betel leaves and areca nuts, fruits, coconut, camphor, incense sticks, flowers, and dhakshanai (money) should be taken to the temple. Those who cannot go to the temple can perform it at home in front of a Lord Vinayaka picture. Here a lighted lamp, a niraikudam, and rice spread on a plate are placed near the child.

Education is first taught by the father, the Guru (teacher) or the priest. It is started with the worship of Lord Vinayaka. The father holds the child's finger and writes the first letter of the Tamil alphabet 'அ' on the rice. (The Tamil symbol 'ஓம்' can also be written).

Learning Music and Arts



It is remarkable to learn it under a qualified Guru. When meeting the Guru for the first time, the following things should be offered as 'Guru Dhakshanai': *Betel leaves and areca nuts, fruits, sugar candy, kumkum, a coconut smeared with turmeric, money and vastram (saree/ dhoti)*. After giving the dhakshanai, we should prostrate before the Guru, and then start to learn. The Fine Arts are mostly commenced on Vijayadasami day or other auspicious days.

Sandhya Vandhanam

Sandhya Vandhanam is the worship done at the juncture of either evening and night, or night and morning. This is the worship of the Sun. The Sandhya Vandhanam is performed to forgive our sins comitted during the day, knowingly or unknowingly, and to bless us for a better life.

Method of performing

1. Asamanam	-	Drink a small quantity of water from your palm after meditating on the Almighty.
2. Maarjanam	-	Sprinkle some water on your body to purify your mind and body.
3. Agamarsanam	-	Worship for forgiveness of the sins committed in the previous births.
4. Surya Arkiyam	-	Sprinkle water after worshipping the Sun God.
5. Pranayamam	-	To control our wavering mind, breathing exercise is done and Gayathri mantra is chanted.
6. Upasnanam	-	Worshipping the Sun God for His blessings.

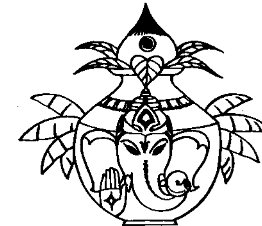
Dheekshai

Dheekshai is the blessing of a Guru in order to lead a Saivite life. It means blessing the student with Gnana (knowledge) and removing worldly desires.

During dheekshai, when the Guru looks at the student, the Aanava (arrogance) is said to be removed. When the Guru gives sacred ash, the bad thoughts are removed. When the Guru touches the student with the dharpai (a sacrificial grass), he/she

is blessed with good thoughts. Then the Guru preaches the dheekshai mantras to his student.

1) Samaya Dheekshai	-	The first, basic dheekshai.
2) Visesha Dheekshai	-	Belongs to Kiriya Margha.
3) Nirvana Dheekshai	-	Belongs to Yoga Margha and Gnana Margha.
4) Sparisa Dheekshai	-	The Guru touching the disciple with his hands.
5) Nayana Dheekshai	-	The Guru looking at the disciple with grace.
6) Manasa Dheekshai	-	The Guru capitivating the mind of the disciple with his mind.
7) Vasaga Dheekshai	-	The Guru preaching good principles.
8) Mantra Dheekshai	-	The Guru preaching mantras.
9) Yoga Dheekshai	-	The Guru teaching yogas to merge with the Lord.
10) Authri Dheekshai	-	The Guru purifying the disciple through Agni kiriyai.



Puberty Ceremony

(Samarthiya Sadangu)

When the girl attains puberty, she is said to have reached womanhood. The family members have Thudakku (defilement) for three days, and hence they should not go to the temple. During earlier days, the girl who attains puberty is made to sit on dry leaves and given a bath at the backyard near the well. Today she is bathed in the bathroom. Her face is then covered with a white cloth and taken to her room. The cloth is removed in front of a lighted lamp, and she stays in the room until the Thudakku is removed. To remove the Thudakku, the priest performs Punniyavasanam either on the fifth or seventh day. In villages, the defilement is removed on the fourth day by taking a bath with a little milk applied on the head.



The diet

During this time, easily digestable foods should be consumed. The diet includes: uzhuthan kali, cooked raw rice (pachchai arisi), brinjal (egg plant/aubergine) milk curry, egg fried in gingelly oil, string hoppers etc.

In the mornings, 3 tablespoons of gingelly oil is good to take. A paste made from neem leaves (10), black pepper (3), ginger, a pinch of cumin seeds, garlic (2 cloves), and a piece of turmeric, is also given to the girl to swallow in the mornings for three days.

Samarthiya Sadangu *(The Ceremony)*

This ceremony is performed on an auspicious day, which falls on the 5th, 7th, 9th, 11th or 13th day from the day of attaining puberty. The maternal uncle and aunt are given priority during this ceremony.



A kolam (rangoli) is drawn, and a niraikudam is placed at the entrance. The girl's face is covered with a white cloth (to avoid seeing inauspicious things), and is made to carry a betel leaf with coins. She is made to sit on a mat (or a plank) covered with a white cloth, facing either east or north. The following things are placed before her: *A niraikudam, a cup of milk, arugampul, fruits, betel leaves and areca nuts, coconut, a vessel for collecting coconut water, lamp and incense sticks.*

The white cloth is removed by witnessing a lighted lamp. The maternal uncle puts 'paal arugu' (arugampul, milk and coins) on the girl's head and blesses her. During this time, camphor aarathi is performed to Lord Vinayaka to remove any obstacles. The coconut is broken into two halves by a relative. Then 'paal arugu' is kept on the girl's head by either 5 or 7 relatives/friends. She is then taken to the bathing place, and the uncle pours water on her head, followed by other elders. The girl is smeared with

turmeric, and then brought back by covering the face with a white cloth. The cloth is removed with the girl facing a lighted lamp.

The girl is dressed like a bride in a new saree, and is given a kumbam (a pot filled with water, adorned with a coconut, neem and mango leaves) by her maternal uncle. The girl's face is covered with a veil and escorted to the hall by young girls carrying lamps and Sumangalis carrying the aarathi trays (see pg 60).

The girl stands facing either east or north, and the veil is removed. Each aarathi is performed on the girl by two Sumangalis. Aarathis are performed to remove the effects of evil eyes. The mother should not perform the aarathi during this ceremony. The first aarathi should always be that of the 'Nirainazhi', and the last two should be that of the 'paalroti and neem leaves' and the 'three lit slices of banana' respectively. The aarathi of the other trays can be performed in any order. The maternal uncle receives the kumbam from the girl and keeps it in the pooja room. The parents put an Andaal garland on her (see picture), as she is considered to be a paavai (damsel). She then prostrates before her parents, uncle and aunt. Then the guests bless the girl and give her gifts.

Sumangali – Symbolises a happily married woman who adorns flowers and kumkum.

Performing the Aarathi at a puberty ceremony

The aarathi is always rotated three times in a clockwise direction. The aarathi of the 'Nirainazhi' and 'Panneer set' are performed in front of the girl and then placed before her on the floor. The aarathi of the 'flowers' are performed and then the flowers are showered on her. After performing the aarathi of the 'paalroti and neem leaves', the paalroti is broken and then thrown in all four directions to chase away the evil spirits. Then her whole body is stroked with the neem leaves, and a few leaves are given to her to bite and spit.

All the other aarathis, carrying food items, are performed twice. First in front of the girl, and secondly above her head and then passed over her head to someone standing behind her. These food products are then given either to the dhobi (washer man) or released into the sea/river.

Recipes

Milk Rice *(Paal pongal)*

Raw rice is cooked with coconut milk and a pinch of salt.

Pittu

The roasted mixture of urid dhal flour, rice flour and a pinch of salt are kneaded with water and then pounded into small balls and steamed.

Kali

Roasted rice flour - 1 cup
Roasted urid dhal flour - 1/2 cup
Coconut milk - 3 cups
Jaggery pieces - 3/4 cup
Pinch of salt

The urid dhal flour, rice flour, jaggery pieces, and salt are added into the boiling coconut milk and cooked slowly, stirring continuously till it thickens.

Paalroti / Velroti

1 cup of raw rice is washed, soaked and powdered (a quarter of it only partly powdered). This is kneaded into dough with coconut milk and 1/4 tsp of salt, and then left for half an hour. Later they are rolled flat and deep-fried like pooris.

Aarathi materials

Niramazhi - The nazhi (brass cup) is filled with paddy, and a thin iron rod/needle piercing a betel leaf is inserted into it.

Pittu

Kali

Milk Rice

Rice and vegetable curries

3 coconuts smeared with turmeric water

Palakarams (sweets)

Panneer Set

Betel leaves, areca nuts, lime, and a bunch of bananas

Flowers

Paalroti and neem leaves

3-lit slices of banana (traditional aarathi)























Marriage Rituals
(Thirumanam)

In the word Thirumanam, 'Thiru' means divine and 'Manam' means uniting, hence it implies 'Theiveega Sangamam' (uniting of the two hearts).

Besides religious and customary ceremonies, the marriages of Tamil Hindus have other special features too. These ceremonies are conducted by highly experienced priests, as per religious customs, through Agni (fire) and blessings of the Almighty. The most important feature of the marriage is the 'Mangalya Thaaranam' (Tying the Thirumangalyam around the bride's neck), and this is done during an auspicious time. On wearing the Thirumangalyam, the bride attains the state of a married woman (Sumangali).

First, the bride and the groom's families compare the horoscopes with an astrologer. Like the custom of seeing the bride at her home in Tamil Nadu (India), the bride is seen at a public place (ie.temple) in Sri Lanka. To confirm the proposed alliance, the bride's family and relatives (except the bride) visit the bridegroom's home on an auspicious day with sweets and fruits. Then both families consult the astrologer for auspicious days for the Ponnurukkal, and for the marriage.

Ponnurukkal *(Melting the gold for the Thirumangalyam)*

This is performed on an auspicious day before the marriage, at either the groom's house or a jeweller's. The bride's family and relatives/friends (except her) participate in this function.

A kolam is drawn, a niraikudam, kuththu vilakkus, panneer set, chanthanam, kumkum and vibhuthi are all kept at the entrance of the bridegroom's house. *In the place of melting the gold, another niraikudam and kuththu vilakku are kept along with coconuts, mango leaves, betel leaves and areca nuts, bananas, turmeric, arugampul, flowers, lime, and a Vinayakar idol (made of turmeric).*

A pooja is done earlier at the temple for the gold coin (to make the Thirumangalyam) and kept in the shrine room. On the Ponnurukkal day, the groom's parents give the coin to the groom to give it to the goldsmith. The goldsmith will then do the dhoopa dheepa aradhanai and melts the coin. The melted gold is kept on a betel leaf and placed on a tray, along with turmeric, coconut, lime, flowers and fruits, and is handed over to the bridegroom. The groom shows it to everyone assembled there, and then gives it back to the goldsmith to make the Thirumangalyam (Thali). The goldsmith is gifted with rice, vegetables and dakshanai (money). From this day onwards, both families start making the palakarams (sweets). It is a customary for the bride and bridegroom not to see each other until the wedding day.

Thirumangalyam *(Thali)*

The image of Lord Vinayakar, Lord Siva or Goddess Lakshmi can be impressed on the Thriumangalyam. The Thirumangalyam, Kodi (gold chain) and two souvereigns, should weigh a total resulting in an odd number (ie. 9, 11 etc.).

Kannikaaloonral /Muhurthakaal
(Planting the post for the pandhal)

On the same day as the Ponnurukkal, the Muhurthakaal is planted in a northeast direction at both the bride and

bridegroom's homes. The Muhurthakaal is a branch of Mulmurungai tree, tied with mango leaves at the top, and a white cloth (carrying a copper coin) dipped in turmeric water tied around the middle. The bridegroom plants it while three sumangalis pour navathanyam, water and milk. They then apply sacred ash, chanthanam, turmeric paste and kumkum on the Muhurthakaal. A coconut is then broken and the dhoopa dheepa aradhanai is done. Then the workers will start building the pandhal (shed). The above process is repeated at the bride's house. After planting the Muhurthakaal, the members of both families should not attend any inauspicious functions.

Mulmurungai – Indian coral tree.
Navathanyam - paddy, wheat, green gram, Mocchai (field beans), sesame seeds, Kollu (horse gram), urid dhal, toor dhal, Bengal gram.

Mulai Paaligai *(Germinating seeds in earthen pots)*

Fill 3 or 5 paaligais (earthen pots) with damp soil. 3 or 5 sumangalis scatter soaked navathanyam seeds into the pot and then sprinkle water and milk three times over it. This is kept in the pooja room, and then taken to the marriage hall on the day of marriage. This ceremony can be done on the Ponnorukkal day or at least three days before the marriage, so that the navathanyam seeds would have germinated on the wedding day. The significance of this ceremony is for the couple and their families to prosper, just like the growing navathanyam. After the marriage, the mulai paaligai is released into the river.

The Pandhal *(shed)*

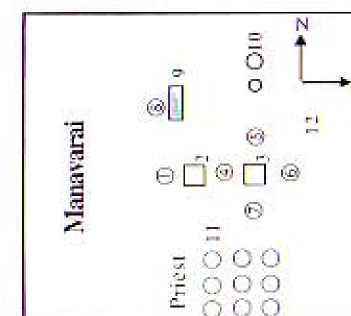
Those days the wedding ceremonies were performed in pandhals at the bride's house. Pandhals were built to accommodate



the guests. They are decorated with festoons of flowers and ribbons, and white sheets are tied under the roof to prevent any dust or insects from falling in.

Decorations

The marriage can be performed either at the bride's house, the temple, or a mandapam (hall). The entrances of the couple's homes are decorated with festoons of mango leaves and coconut palm leaves (see picture), and also a plantain tree, bearing flowers and a bunch of bananas, is tied on either side of the gate. A kolam is drawn, and a niraikudam set is also kept there. These decorations are also done at the wedding venue (ie. mandapam/temple). The significance of keeping the plantain trees, are for the families of the couple to prosper like the multiplication of the plantain trees.



In the hall, the Manavarai (the couple's throne over which a majestically decorated arch stands) should face east, and the following things are kept before it as shown in the diagram:

1. Vinayakar
2. Homa kundam
3. Arasani
4. to 7. A kumbam and a kuththu vilakku each
8. Chandra kumbam
9. Ammi
10. Siva and Parvathi kumbams
11. Navagraha kumbams
12. Turmeric water pot - for the ring.
(The Mulai paaligai pots are kept before the Chandra kumbam)

Mapillai Azhaippu *(Inviting the Bridegroom)*



The mapillai thozhan (bride's brother) and relatives arrive at the bridegroom's residence with bananas, palakarams (sweets) and coconuts, each on a different tray covered with a cloth. The bridegroom holds betel leaves and coins in each hand and sits on a wooden plank facing east. His head is covered with a white towel/cloth. Three or five couples put 'paal arugu' (milk, arugampul and coins) three times on his head. The maternal uncle breaks a coconut facing the north. Then the bridegroom takes a bath, wears the traditional outfit, worships in the pooja room and prostrates before his parents.

A Thalaipaakhai (turban), an Uthareeyam (shawl), and a garland are adorned on the bridegroom by elders. (The Uthareeyam is

placed over the left shoulder and tied near the right hip, see picture). Similarly, the Thalaipaakhai and Uthareeyam are adorned on the thozhan, and he stands to the left of the bridegroom.

Escorting the Bridegroom



Before leaving the house, two sumangalis perform aarathi. The thozhi (carrying the Koorai tray) and the thozhan accompany the bridegroom and his parents. They travel to the hall in a decorated vehicle. The other relatives follow with trays of coconuts, palakarams, flowers and fruits. (The total number of trays taken to the wedding, including the Koorai tray, should be in odd numbers).

thozhi - married sister/female relative of the bridegroom.
thozhan - unmarried brother/male relative of the bride.







Koorai Tray - *Paddy or raw rice spread on a tray, with the following things placed over it: Koorai saree; blouse; betel leaves and areca nuts; Kasturi turmeric; kumkum; lime; coconut; a bunch of bananas; flowers; soap; comb; mirror; powder; perfume; the Thirumangalyam with the kodi (gold chain); and a pair of Mettis (toe rings).*



The Bride

(If the puberty ceremony has not been performed, then it should be done the day before the wedding.)

Similarly at the bride's house, elders keep 'paal arugu' on her head, and then she takes a bath. She is then dressed as a bride and her face is covered with a veil. Aarathi is performed, and thereafter the bride is escorted to the marriage hall by her family in a decorated vehicle. The bride should be at the hall before the bridegroom arrives. Here, she will stay in a room.

Arrival of the Bridegroom

On arriving at the marriage hall, the bridegroom is received by the bride's family. The mapillai thozhan will wash the groom's feet with water. In return, the bridegroom presents a gold ring to the thozhan. The bride's father garlands the groom, and then two sumangalis perform the aarathi. The mapillai thozhan will then escort the bridegroom to the Manavarai.

The Wedding Ceremony

At the Manavarai, it is a custom to spread paddy on the couple's seat and cover with a Kambalam (a small carpet). The bridegroom sits on this. The mapillai thozan sits on his left side until the bride arrives. It is the priest who is in charge of the ceremony and the pooja things required. The priest first performs a pooja to Lord Vinayaka to shower His blessings and remove any obstacles during the ceremony. The priest then gives sacred ash and a pavithiram (ring made from dharpai) to the bridegroom. The groom wears the pavithram on his right hand ring finger. This is to prevent any faults during the rituals. The priest performs Sankalpam (a solemn vow) and Punniyavasanam (purifying the body and place) poojas by chanting mantras, and then gives Panchakavyam to drink.

Angurarpanam *(Seed sowing ceremony)*

After the Chandra kumbam pooja, 3 or 5 sumangalis from both families sow the Navathanyam seeds in a paaligai pot and sprinkle water three times. (If the Mulai paaligai has been done earlier and brought to the hall, then they will just sprinkle water.) These women will each be offered flowers and a banana on a betel leaf. The significance of this ceremony is for the couple's life to flourish, just like the Navathanyam growing into green plants.

Kaappu kattuthal / Rakshabhandanam

(Tying the sacred thread)

To perform this, raw rice is spread on a tray, and the kaappu (sacred thread), a coconut, betel leaves and areca nuts are placed over it. A pooja is done and the priest ties the kaappu on the right wrist of the bridegroom. An uncle of the bridegroom breaks a coconut. The kaappu is tied to protect from any obstructions, sorrows and defilements during the ceremony, in order for it to run smoothly.

Escorting the bride to the Manavarai

The bride (face covered with a veil) is led to the Manavarai by bridesmaids, the thozhi, her parents and relatives. She will sit on the right side of the bridegroom. All the poojas conducted to the bridegroom, will be repeated to the bride. The bride wears the pavithram on her left hand ring finger, and the kaappu on her left wrist. This time an uncle of the bride will break the coconut.

The bride and groom now symbolize the Divine couple, Siva and Parvathi.

Poojas for the kumbams

Afterwards, the priest will perform pooja chanting mantras for the Siva Parvathi kumbams. The priest then starts the Homam (sacred fire) invoking Lord Agni (god of Fire) in it to bear witness to the marriage ie. 'Agni Satchi'. To avert the Mugurtha dhosham (evil influences during marriage rituals) and the Lakhna dhosham (bad zodiacal influences), poojas for the Navagraha kumbams are performed. Finally, a pooja is done for the Arasani tree and the four kumbams around it.

Both families offer Nandhi dhaanams (charity) to remove any dhoshams (evil influences) on their ancestors, and to get their blessings.

Kannikathanam *(Giving the bride's hand in marriage)*



The parents of the couple do Sankalpam, and then offer chanthanam, kumkum and sprinkle rose water on each other. An areca nut, banana, lime and a gold coin (or any other coin) are placed on a betel leaf, and is held by the bride with her right hand. Her father then holds this hand with both his hands. The priest pronounces the names of the couple's great-grandfathers, grandfathers, and fathers respectively, three times. The bride's father then prays for the prosperity of both families and to also obtain Dharma, Wealth, Pleasure and Mukthi. With the consent of the bridegroom, the bride's mother pours water on the hands of her husband and daughter. The bride's father then gives his daughter's hand in marriage to the bridegroom ie. Kannikathanam. At this time the Nathaswaram and Thavil are played loudly, and an uncle of the bridegroom breaks the coconut. The Koorai tray brought by the bridegroom will be subjected



to pooja and purified with Agni. It is then taken around by a couple to be blessed by elders. Thereafter, the bridegroom presents the Koorai tray to the bride. The bride then goes to her room with the thozhi to change. In the meantime, the priest will do Sambadha Homam for the Thali.

Sambhada Homam - pouring ghee into the Homam and also a little on the Thali.

Tying the Thirumangalyam / Thali *(Nuptial knot)*

After changing into the Koorai saree, the bride arrives and sits on the right side of the bridegroom. At the auspicious moment of tying the 'Thali', the bridegroom will go to the right side of the bride. He meditates on the Lord and then ties the Thali around the bride's neck. When tying the Thali, the bridegroom should face west. During this time, mantras are chanted, Nadhaswaram and Thavil are played loudly, the coconut is broken into two by a bridegroom's relative, and elders bless by sprinkling Akshadai.

Thirumangalya Mantra:

"Mangalyam Thandunanena Mama Jeevana Hedhuna, Kandu Batami Subake Sanjeeva Saraddha Sadam"

***which means*:**

"Oh Bhagyavathy! I tie this Thirumangalyam around your neck, which is the symbol of my immortality."

By meditating on the mantra chanted by the priest, the groom applies vibhuthi and kumkum on the Thirumangalyam, and thus blesses her with long life. He also applies kumkum on the centre of the bride's hairline, a symbol of marriage.

Maalai Maatrudhal *(Exchange of garlands)*

The bride will get up facing the north, and meditating on the Lord, she garlands the bridegroom. He in turn garlands her. This is repeated three times. The exchange of garlands denotes the commencement of a family life in which the two hearts are united. Then the bridegroom presents the auspicious products such as turmeric, kumkum, flowers, perfume, comb and a mirror to the bride. Both will look at their faces in the mirror.

Giving fruit and milk

The bride feeds the bridegroom bananas and milk three times. The bridegroom then feeds the bride three times. A curtain will be held in front during this time. The philosophy behind this is that their life together should be as sweet as the fruit and milk.

Kodharisanam

A cow is made to face east, and the couple adorn it with chanthanam, kumkum and flowers, and then perform the dhoopa dheepa pooja. The couple worship the cow as Goddess Mahalakshmi for the 'Ashta Iswaryam' (eight types of wealth) essential for leading a life.

The Gods, Celestial beings and Rishis present in the cow bless the couple. Rice, vegetables and dhakshanai are then offered as Dhaanam.

Paanigrahanam *(Holding hands)*



The marriage is done for performing charities and for the growth of the family. Paanigrahanam means taking the bride's hand by the bridegroom. While holding her right hand with his right hand, he promises her that he will never leave her even in old age.

Ezhu Adi Nadathal *(The first seven steps)*

Starting with seven steps, they go around the homam accompanied by the thozhi and thozhan. The right hand of the bride should be held by the right hand of the bridegroom while walking the seven steps. For each step a mantra is chanted :



1. Let the Lord follow you to lead a life without hunger.
2. Let the Lord follow you for strength.
3. Let the Lord follow you when observing fasts.
4. Let the Lord follow you for a healthy and peaceful life.
5. Let the Lord follow you for the propagation of cattles.

6. Let the Lord follow you for a prosperous life.
7. Let the Lord follow you so that auspicious ceremonies and Homams are performed successfully throughout your life.

This ceremony implies the message 'As we walk the seven steps together, we become friends / partners. Let us earn the seven kinds of wealth in life and share our joys and miseries'. The seven steps are also termed 'Sapthapadhi'.

Ammi Midhithal *(Stepping on the grinding stone)*

After the seven steps, the bridegroom places the right foot of the bride on the grinding stone (i.e the eighth step). Then the groom puts a Metti (a silver toe ring) on her second toe. This ceremony implies that the bride should withstand enemies like the stone. It also reveals that happiness and miseries should be faced in a principled life like the stone that withstands everything. The couple then continue around the Homam, and facing east they offer Nelpori (puffed rice) to the fire. In the second round the Metti is worn on the second toe of the left foot. The Metti is also a symbol of marriage.

Kanaiyaazhi Eduthal *(Taking the ring)*

In the third round, the couple have to try and take the ring from a pot of turmeric water kept on the right side. They do it three times giving in to each other. This is to imply that even in life they should give in to each other.

Arundhathi Paarthal *(Seeing the star Arundhathi)*



During the third round,'Arundhathi paarthal' ceremony will take place. The couple are led by the priest to the north entrance of the mandapam to perform pooja for the stars in the sky, and then the Arundhathi is shown.

Arundhathi, wife of Vasishtar, is known for her chastity. The Purana states that Arundhathi and Vasishtar are found between the seven stars near the Thuruva mandalam.

The Thuruva star is also shown along with Arundhathi. This star has a permanent place in the sky and is the reason for the presence of other stars. Hence, it is worshipped to protect us from enemies.

Pori Iduthal *(Offering puffed rice)*

At the end of each round the couple face east, and the thozhan receives the Nelpori (puffed rice) from the priest and gives it to the bridegroom. The groom along with the bride offers it to the fire, and then worship the fire as Lord Agni to bless them with wealth. After the third round, the priest gives the Homam products to the couple to offer it to the fire.

The Vedhas state that Lord Agni entrusts the products offered to the fire to the particular Gods. The Dheepa pooja is done and the priest blesses them with vibhuthi, chanthanam and Rakshai (a black bindhi made from the residue of Homam).

Aasirvadham *(Blessings)*



The couple face east and the priest blesses them by chanting mantras and sprinkling akshadai on their heads. Then the parents of the couple, and other elders bless them with akshadai.

Akshadai *(Arugarisi)*

The mixture of raw rice (unbroken), arugampul and turmeric powder is known as 'Arugarisi'. The elders bless the bride and bridegroom individually by sprinkling akshadai on their heads three times and reciting:

"Aal Pol Thazhaittu, Arugu Pol Verrodi, Moongil Pol Suttrram Muzhumayaai Suzha, Pathinaarum Pettru Peru Vazhvu Vazha Vendum."

"Flourish like the Banyan tree, enroot like the Arugampul, be surrounded by relatives like the Bamboo tree, and live with the 16 acquisitions".

Niraivu

The kaappus and pavitharams worn by the couple are untied along with the pavithrams of the parents. The priest is given dhakshanai placed on a betel leaf. Rice and vegetables are also given to him.

Aarathi

Aarathi is performed by two sumangalis to protect the couple from the effects of evil eyes. The couple then go to the temple with the archanai products (betel leaves, areca nuts, coconut, fruits, incense sticks, camphor and flowers) to do an Archanai.

Then they go to the bride's home where aarathi is taken at the entrance, and they enter with the right foot first.

Thalaipaaghai (Turban) - This is worn by men who perform the following:

1. Breaking the coconut.
2. Carrying the Koorai tray around for blessings.
3. Kannikathanam.

Boodhakalam

The feast for the couple is served on one banana leaf, and the couple feed each other. The bridegroom then takes the bride to his home where Aarathi is taken at the entrance, and they enter with the right foot first.



Recipes of Palakaarams

Sittrundi

Filling

Two cups of moong dhal is roasted and powdered. 1/2 lb of sugar and 1/4 tsp cardamom powder are added to it and mixed together.

Method



Two cups of roasted rice flour is mixed with coconut milk (extracted from one coconut) and kneaded well by adding salt. The dough is made into small cup shapes and filled with the moong dhal mix. They are folded and the edges are pressed (like patties), and then fried.

Modhakam

The recipe is the same as that of kozhukattai (pg.51), but in the shape of a ball, as shown in the picture.

Acchu Palakaram

1 cup roasted rice flour, 1/2 cup roasted urid dhal flour, 1/4 tsp salt and 1tsp sesame seeds are mixed together. 3/4 cup boiled coconut milk is added to this and made into dough. The dough is then squeezed through the Murukku Acchu (a kitchen gadget) and fried in oil to make Murukku.

1/4 lb of sugar and a cup of water are boiled to make sugar syrup. The fried murukku is then dipped in the sugar syrup. (Pepper and cumin seeds can be used in the dough for spicy murukku.)

Parruthithuraivadai

1/2 cup urid dhal (soaked for 4-6 hours), 1/2 tsp fennel seeds, 1tsp partly powdered chilli, curry leaves, 3tsp chopped onions, 3/4 cup steamed wheat flour, and a pinch of salt are kneaded into a thick dough using warm water. This is then rolled, cut into round shapes and fried.

Seeni Ariyadharam

1/2 cup raw rice flour is mixed with a pinch of salt, and sugar syrup (made from 1/2 cup sugar). It is allowed to stand for two hours. Then it is made into small balls and pressed flat on a banana leaf coated with oil, and then fried.

Payatram Urundai

2 cups roasted green gram flour (moong dhal flour) with 1/4 tsp cardamom powder is kneaded by adding sugar syrup (made from 1 cup sugar). Grated coconut can also be added. Then it is made into small balls, dipped in batter and fried.

Batter - 1 cup rice flour and coconut milk mixed with a pinch of salt.



House - warming

Auspicious land

A question would arise about the auspiciousness of the land. Our ancestors have paved a way for this. There are things to be considered when buying a land. It should not be a soggy/ damp land; Red soil would be preferable; If a mango, neem, or jackfruit tree is present, it is considered favourable; The pipal and banyan trees are considered unfavourable; The land should not be opposite a temple.

How to commence constructing a house?

First an astrologer is consulted before constructing a house. The bare land may have faults and curses. Even big houses are ruined because of this. Hence, to remove the defects of the land, 'Vairavar shanthi' pooja is performed before laying the foundation.

Laying the foundation for the house

The foundation is laid on an auspicious day, such as the "Ezhunthirupu Naal" (the day the Vaasthu Purusha arises). The following products are essential when laying the foundation.

Soil from crab burrow
Elephant tusk soil
Bull horn soil
River soil
Anthill soil
Navarathnam (9 kinds of gems)
The Vaasthu Chakra worshipped for 45 days

All these are kept in a wooden box. Before laying the foundation, the priest performs the Vigneswara pooja. Then the mason (builder) is given vastram (clothes) and dhakshanai (money).

The pit in which the foundation is to be laid should be cleaned. A coconut is broken, camphor is lighted and after worshipping Lord Vinayaka, the wooden box is placed in the pit, and the mason then closes the pit with cement.

Vaasthu Purusha - Presiding deity of a house.

Fixing the door frame

The door is the entrance through which we enter the house with our right foot first. Hence, it is a must to consult the astrologer for an auspicious day to fix it. Then on that particular day, the door frame is fixed with the worship of Lord Vinayaka.

Constructing the roof and pillars

In the early days roofing was done using palmyrah wood and leaves, but today tiles are used. The roof is the most important part of the house and it is supported by pillars. Hence when constructing these, Lord Vinayaka is worshipped by offering coconut and performing the dhoopa dheepa pooja.

How to perform house-warming?

The astrologer is consulted for an auspicious day and time to perform the house-warming, according to the bith star of the head of the family. The Shanthi pooja is performed to remove the evil eyes and for the prosperity of the newly built house. A cow is also tied at the entrance.

On the day of house-warming, the priest performs the Lord Vinayaka and Navagraha Homams. Then poojas for Lord Siva and Sakthi, and goddess Mahalakshmi are done. After the poojas, the kumba water is poured on the family members. Then they change into new clothes and worship the Almighty.

The pictures of gods, a mirror, lamp, betel leaves, areca nuts, turmeric, salt, flowers, fruits, money box (containing paddy and a gold coin), a whole coconut (for planting), dhoti and saree kept in the temple for pooja the previous day, are brought home on this day. Before entering the house, everyone must take a glimpse of the cow.

The pooja room is considered to be the most sacred room in a house. In the pooja room the following things are kept: water in a brass pot; lamp, niraikudam; fruits, areca nuts and betel leaves. The milk is boiled for the first time and also kept there. The husband and wife perform pooja with dhoopam and dheepam. The house key is kept in the pooja room and handed over to the head of the family by the priest. He in turn gives it to his wife, who has to close the pooja room and then open it during an auspicious time. The whole coconut is then planted in the garden.

The months during which the 'Vaasthu Purusha' arises

Tamil Month	Tamil Date	Time		
Chithirai	10	7.00	-	8.30am
Vaikasi	21	9.12	-	10.42am
Aadi	11	6.48	-	8.18am
Avani	6	2.24	-	3.54pm
Aipasi	11	6.48	-	8.18am
Karthigai	8	10.00	-	11.30am
Thai	12	9.12	-	10.42am
Masi	22	9.12	-	10.42am

Things required for House-Warming

Turmeric, nirai- naazhi,kuththu vilakku, niraikudam, salt, mirror, garlands, rice, fruits, coconuts (including one with husk), flowers, arugampul, milk, ingredients for chakkarai pongal, sugar candy, banana leaf, mango leaves, chanthanam, kumkum, sacred ash, money box, 3 or 5 Swami pictures (Vinayakar, Lakshmi, Venktachalapathy, Siva-Parvathy family, Muragan with Valli and Deyvaanai, Saraswathi).



Vaasthu Shanthi *(Propitiatory ceremony)*

This is one of the Shanthi poojas performed during house-warming. The process of purifying the land with Agni is known as 'Vaasthu Shanti'. During this Shanthi, Vigneswara pooja and Punniyavasanam are done, the Vaasthu Purushan and other Devas are worshipped, and Agni Homam is performed.

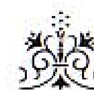
The white pumpkin is used as a sacrifice. A small model of a man is made with straw and dharpai, and is burnt with fire after worshipping the Vaasthu Purushan. The burning effigy is dragged

around the house and the street. Then holy water is sprinkled over it. After this Vaasthu Shanti, the performer washes himself and continues the kiriyas.

The Homam products required for house-warming

Rice flour
Turmeric powder
Sesame seeds
Navathanyam
Puffed paddy
Homam products
Firewood (samithu)
Ghee
Incense sticks, camphor, gumbenzoin
Aththar (Rose oil)
Rice
Coconut
Mango leaves and banana leaves
Arugampul
Lotuses, garlands
Betel leaves and areca nuts
Fruits
Lime
White pumpkin
Bundle of straws
Silk cloth for kumbam





Significant Ages

Sashtiaptha Poorthi / Mani Vizha (60th year)

Sashtiaptha poorthi denotes the completion of sixty years, and hence is very significant in a man's life. In the Hindu calendar, sixty years is a cycle, and each year has a different name. At the completion of sixty years, this cycle starts all over again. Hence, the 60th year of a man is celebrated as Mani Vizha.

The first 30 years of a man's life is spent on education, name and fame. The next 30 years is spent in bringing up children. From the 60th year onwards, one should spend his days for the upliftment of his Atma.

It is significant to celebrate the Mani Vizha at the Thirukadavur temple in Tamil Nadu. This is where 'Kala Samkara Murthi' (Lord Siva) rescued Markandan from Yama and blessed him to be 16yrs of age forever. This is also the temple where Goddess Abhirami saved Abhirami Pattar by showing a Full moon on Thai Amavasai (New moon day). The Miruthyunja Homam is perfomed here, and the kumba water is poured onto the couple celebrating Mani Vizha.

Pavala Vizha 75th year / Muthu Vizha 80th year

Just like the Mani Vizha, the Pavala Vizha is celebrated at the completion of 75 years. This function is celebrated with poojas, abishekams and aradhanais to their family deities.

Those who celebrate Muthu Vizha (Sadhabishekam), i.e 80 years of age, would have seen a 1000 moon crescents during their lifetime.

Funeral Rites

(Saiva Aparakiriyai)

'Aparam' means 'later', and hence the kiriyai (ritual) performed after the death of a person is known as 'Aparakiriyai'. This consists of several kiriyais from Uthkirandhi Kiriyai to Varuda Sirartham. These kiriyas are performed for those who obtained `Samaya Dheekshai'(pg.54). For others it is done without mantras, but by chanting the Thirumurais. Hence, it is good to obtain the Samaya Deekshai.

Uthkirandhi Kiriyai

On one's deathbed, one should be rid of worldly desires. One should wear the sacred ash, meditate on Lord Siva, and listen to Thevarams and Thiruvasakams. Performing 'kodhaanam' (giving a cow as charity) is significant.

After death, the son/relative who obtained Samaya dheekshai should perform the following procedures. He should apply sacred ash and soil (taken from beneath the vilvam tree) on the body of the deceased, and then pours the Ganga theertham into the mouth. The head is then placed on the lap, and the son chants the Sri Panchatchara into the ear and then covers the ear. After this, the body is bathed, dressed, and then placed with the head towards the south. The thumbs are tied together with white cloth as well the two big toes. The body should be covered with a white cloth, and a water vessel should be placed beneath the body. A lighted lamp (kuththu vilakku) is also kept near the head. The wife, children and relatives should recite Thevarams and Thiruvasakams with devotion.

The stars Avittam, Sadhayam, Poorataadhi, Utharataadhi and Revathi are known as Thanishta Panchami (pg.93). When one dies on one of these Panchamis, charity should be performed to overcome the dhosham.

***Soornotsavam** (Kiriyas performed in the house)*

A temporary pandhal (shed) should be constructed at the courtyard of the deceased. A white sheet is tied under the roof of the pandhal. The pandhal should be, made flat- roof with green coconut leaves and adorned with mango leaves and festoons of coconut palms. Two mondhans (a type of plantain tree) with bunch of green plantains should be tied on either side of the entrance. The floor should be smeared with cow dung, and the mandapam should be divided into three using makolam (rice flour kolam). At the west corner of the mandapam, the Snabhana kumbams (Siva kumbam surrounded by eight kumbams) are placed. The eight kumbas represent the following Gods: Kuberan, Easanan, Indran, Agni, Yaman, Nirudhi, Varunan and Vaayu. A homa kundam (fire pit) should be made at the centre, and a large pestle and mortar is placed on the east side. The 'perris' (a kind of drum) used for perithaadanam is kept to the east of the pestle and mortar. (Nowadays, they use a bell instead of perris).

The pestle and mortar should be decorated with mango leaves, koorcham, kodivastram and garlands. The mortar is filled with arugampul and turmeric powder. Gingelly oil, arappu, lime, abisheka products, and a white cloth for the deceased should be tied around the pestle and mortar. The Karana Agama states that a kumbam should be placed near the mortar and the Pasupadha Astradevar should be invoked in it. The Rudra kumbam (earthen pot) to be taken to the crematorium should be kept to the north of the Homa kundam. The punniyavasana kumbam and panchakavyam should be placed to the south of the snabhana kumbams.

The eldest son performs the rites for the father, and the youngest son for the mother. If there are no sons, then the wife/ husband, daughter, brother, nephew, father, mother, niece, sister, disciple, Guru or a friend can perform the rites respectively. When the performer is anyone but the son, wife or daughter, then they must have performed these rites before to either their father or mother.

The performer has to shave his head, moustache and beard, take a bath, wear kodivastrams (ie. dhoti and shawl) and then perform the Saiva Anuttanams. The priest gives the performer sacred ash, pavithram (to wear on the right hand ring finger) and upaveedham (ie.poonool, to wear over the right shoulder), and then sankalpam is done. The Vinayaka pooja and punniyavasanam are performed and the panchakavyam is sprinkled to purify the place, and then puffed grains are scattered. The performer should not drink the panchakavyam during this time. The Thirumurais are sung during the kiriyas. The priest completes the kiriyas with Anganiyasam, Karaniyasam and Sivayogam, Snabhana kumba pooja and offering the Poorna Aguthi. The performer scatters puffed grains over the dead body and performs the dheepa pooja. The defiled people will face west and place gingelly oil and arappu on the head, and then the body is bathed. Abishekam is done with rice flour, turmeric powder, milk, curd, tender coconut water, panchakavyam, and kumba water. The sacred ash is then smeared on the body, rose water is sprinkled, and mantras are chanted. The garland is adorned on the body, and kumkum and chanthanam are put on the forehead.

After performing the perithaadanam, 81 padamantras are chanted. Then the Thirupotchunnam stanzas from the Thiruvasakam is recited while pounding the arugampul and turmeric powder

using the pestle and mortar. During this time, the grandchildren surround the body holding a lighted bandham (torch) each. Finally, the Pancha Puranam is recited. The chunnam (the pounded arugampul and turmeric) is made to a paste on a betel leaf by adding a little water from the Pasupadha Astradevar kumbam. This paste is put on the forehead of the deceased as a bindhi, and then smeared over both eyes and sprinkled all over the body. The priest is given dhakshanai, and then yaathrai dhaanam is performed for the upliftment of the soul.

The wife, daughters and female relatives go around the body in an anticlockwise direction and offer vaikarisi (mixture of rice and grated coconut). The wife and children will worship by showering flowers on the feet. The body is then covered with a cloth, and the bier/coffin is carried feet side in front.

(If the husband dies first, the wife has to remove her Thirumangalyam and place it on the chest of her husband's body. If the wife dies first, the daughter or a female relative touches the body with a Nirainazhi (vessel with paddy and dheepam) and then keeps it in the room. A coconut, betel leaf, areca nut and a banana are tied on her saree pallu.)

Outside the house, the women go around the bier/coffin three times in an anticlockwise direction. The performer carries the Rudra kumbam and leads the way with his head held low. A relative carries a pot of burning embers, the Sangu (conch) is blown, and the others follow reciting the Thirumurais and throwing puffed grains.

After the body has left the house, the whole house is cleaned and mopped.

At the crematorium when placing the body down, the head should be on the south side. The male relatives and friends then offer vaikarisi.

(If the wife is dead, her husband unties the pallu and removes the coconut, betel leaf, areca nut and banana. He then breaks the coconut and then removes her Thirumangalyam.)

The performer carries the Rudra kumbam on his left shoulder and goes round the body three times in an anticlockwise direction. He then places the kumbam near the head of the body and breaks the neck of the kumbam. He offers vaikarisi (wet with the kumba water) with a coin by chanting the Thatpurusha mantra. The bier/coffin is placed over the pyre. The performer then goes round the body three times, in an anticlockwise direction, carrying the kumbam on the left shoulder and a fire torch in his right hand. The man blowing the Sangu follows him and makes a hole on the pot at the end of each round, and then sprinkles the water flowing out over the pyre. Finally, the performer stands on the south side (ie. the head side) facing south, and without looking at the body, he places the fire torch (ie. Kolli) on the pyre and drops the kumbam over his left shoulder. He then walks over to the other side (near the feet), removes the pavithram and upaveedham and throws them into the fire, does a Namaskaram by bowing his head, and then walks off. (If the sea or a river is nearby, the performer bathes there and then performs Nivapanchali Dharpanam.)

The performer goes home carrying a knife (made of iron) to prevent the evil spirits from following him. At the entrance of his house, he bites neem leaves and spits them, steps on a stone crosses over a pestle (ulakkai), washes his hands and feet, and then goes in and takes a bath.

picture of the deceased is placed on a small table, and then a lighted lamp, a cup of water, and also tender coconut water are placed before it. A relative brings the meal served on a plate and places it before the picture. The Thirumurais are recited, and then everyone have the meals. The people except those who do not have defilement (thudakku) should not eat. If they do, then they have to observe the defilement (ie. they cannot go to the temple) for 31 days. During the 31 days, a lamp is lighted and a pot of water is kept before the picture, and the Thirumarais are recited.

Asthi Sanjayanam *(kaadaathu- collecting the ashes)*

On the day of cremation, or on the third, fifth, seventh or ninth day, the ashes of the deceased should be collected. When collecting the ashes, if the fire has faded out, it is ignited again, and the Prayachitha homam and Thathuva homam are performed. Then water is poured to put out the fire. Abishekam is performed with abisheka materials from the feet side to the head side. Then the mantras from Sathyosaadam to Panjabrahmam are recited, during which time vibhuthi, chanthanam, kumkum and flowers are put at the following places over the ashes: knee, naval, chest, forehead, and head. The dhoopa dheepa poojas are then performed. The ashes are collected from these five places and put into a pot filled with milk. The mouth of the pot is then covered with a new white cloth and tied.

The remaining ashes are collected separately. The place is then cleared and sprinkled with navathanyam, water and milk. Naivethyam such as betel leaves, areca nuts, fruits, puffed grains, rotis, and vadais are placed here to passify the evil spirits (boodhas, prethas etc.). The Thirumurais are recited and then the ashes are all released into the river/sea.

Materials to be taken for Asthi Sanjayanam:

7 rotis (made from rice flour), milk, curd, bucket, knife, plantain leaf, incense sticks, tender coconut, betel leaves and areca nuts, coconut, flowers, earthen pot, navathanyam, vadais (made from black urid dhal), fruits, puffed grains, and camphor.

Thanishta Panchami Shanthi

If one dies in the star of Avittam, Sadhayam, Poorataadhi, Utharataadhi or Revathi, 'Shanthi' should be performed to overcome the dhosham.

The Panchami Shanthi is performed during an auspicious day and star, or on the night of the Andhiyeshti. During this time, a Poorna kumbam, a pot of water, and a lighted dheepam should be kept in the house for 1, 2 or 3 days. A cow is also tied outside. A pumpkin is hung outside the house, and everyone in the house tie a mantra thread on their wrists.

Ettu Chelavu

Neither the Paththathi nor the Agamas state anything about this. It is a kiriya performed by custom. It is done on the 5th or 7th day of death. All the favourite foods of the deceased are cooked and offered as 'padayal' in front of the picture. The Thirumurais are recited and the dheepa pooja is done. A small quantity of each food is packed and then taken and placed at a street junction. Then meals are served to the close relatives after serving to the poor.

Andhiyeshti *(31st day)*

Andhiyeshti is the final homam. It is done to remove any faults during the performance of religious Asaram (rites) and Anuttanam (rituals). It is performed as Samaya Andhiyeshti, Vishedha Andhiyeshti or Nirvana Andhiyeshti, depending on the nature of the dheekshai obtained by the deceased.

The Andhiyeshti is performed at the crematorium on the day of cremation, to those who obtained Vishedha dheekshai, Nirvana dheekshai, and the vegetarians who obtained Samaya dheekshai. For all the others, including the non-vegetarians who obtained Samaya dheekshai, it is performed on the 30th day at either the seashore, riverbank, or near the well.

The defilement is observed for 30 days. If they are vegetarians, then they can observe the defilement for 16 days.

On the 30th day, after the performer leaves the house, the house should be cleaned and mopped, and everyone takes a bath. The priest then performs punniyavasanam to remove the defilement. At the riverbank/seashore, the performer performs the following ceremonies.

Nagnadhaanam

Nagnadhaanam is performed to remove the hunger, thirst, and cold of the deceased. Rice and vastrams (dhoti and shawl) are offered to the priest. If the deceased had obtained a higher dheekshai, this should be done on the day of cremation after cremating the body.

Pashana Thaabanam

The method of worshipping the Anma (soul) of the deceased in a Pashanam (stone) is known as Pashana thaabanam. The kiriyas done for the stone denotes the removal of hunger, thirst, and also the form of the dead body.

The Rudrabali is performed for Lord Siva. Naivedhyam (food) and pindam (a ball made from rice flour, urid dhal flour, sesame seeds, milk, curd, ghee, honey and banana) are then offered to the Pashanam. The dhoopa dheepa pooja is done, and the relatives recite the Thirumurais and worship it by offering flowers.

The performer then steps into the river/sea and stands with the water level up to his chest. The musical instruments are played, while his relatives hand over the pindam, kumbam, and pashanam to him to be released into the river/sea in that order. He then takes a bath and returns home.

At the entrance of the house, he bites a few neem leaves and spits them. He then touches white sesame seeds, water, dhoopam, cow dung, and soil. After this, he steps on a stone and crosses over a pestle, washes his hands and feet, two women perform aarathi, and then he enters the house.

Nava Sirartham

A noble priest is invited and offered dhaanam for the upliftment of the soul of the deceased. Holy water is obtained from the priest and sprinkled over the Pashanam, in order for the deceased to be relieved from the form of the dead body and attain Liberation.

Sangitha Sirartham

This is performed to remove any faults during the performance of religious Asaram (rites) and Anuttanam (rituals) by those who obtained dheekshai.

Durmaranam prayachitham

Durmaranam is death due to unnatural causes (ie. accident etc.). In the case of suicide, the Andhiyeshti is performed at the end of either the 3rd or 6th month. In the case of other unnatural deaths, it is performed on the 30th day.

Veetukiriyai (Ceremonies performed at home)

The veetukiriyas are performed the day after Andhiyeshti, ie. on the the 31st day. The hall is cleaned and mopped. Festoons of plam leaves and mango leaves are tied at the entrance. A niraikudam is placed at the entrance. An odd number of priests are invited home to perform the ceremonies. The main priest sits facing north, and the Poorna kumbam, lighted lamp, and an idol of Vinayakar (made of turmeric) is also placed there. The priest first performs sankalpam, followed by Vinayakar Pooja, dhoopa dheepa pooja, panchakavya pooja and Varuna kumba pooja. Then the performer is given the panchakavyam to drink. After this, the following ceremonies are performed.

Anunjai

A plantain leaf, on which 3 dharpais, a pavithram, sesame seeds, thamboolam (betel leaves and areca nuts), upaveedham (poonool) and coins, is placed on the performer's head. Then the performer worships the priest to allow him to perform the Sirarthams to the deceased. He then turns round three times in an anticlockwise direction.

After this, the priest gives him a dharpai to tuck it in his waist. Then he wears the pavithram on his right ring finger, and the upaveedham over his right shoulder.

Pooja for the Sun

The performer goes outside and looks at the Sun, he sprinkles water, showers flowers, and then turns round three times in a clockwise direction.

Edaba Dhaanam (Charity of a bull)

Edaba (bull) is the form of Dharma. The Edaba is offered to Lord Siva symbolising the surrendering of the benefits of charity obtained by the deaceased. When it is not possible to perform the charity of a bull, then an image of a bull is drawn on a tray of rice, and a coconut is placed over it. The performer pulls the tray in all four directions by chanting the appropriate mantras, and then offers it to the priest with dhakshanai.

Ekhothittam

This is the charity given to a priest, considering him as the soul of the deceased. A priest sits facing the west, and he is given these products: gingelly oil, arappu, lime, dhoti, shawl, chanthanam, flowers, rice and vegetables. A plantain leaf is placed before him. A dharpai is placed on the leaf with its tip facing south. The performer faces south and keeping his left palm and left knee on the floor, takes the pindam with his right hand, and passing under the left hand places it on the dharpai. Then he gets up and puts chanthanam, kumkum and flowers on the pindam. Betel leaves, areca nuts, fruits and a tender coconut are placed nearby.

The performer then performs dhoopa dheepa pooja and dharpanam. The pindam is then put into the dharpanam vessel and later offered to a cow, or released into the river/sea.

Pindam - a ball made of rice flour, urid dhal flour, sesame seeds, milk, curd, ghee, honey and banana.

Dharpanam - A dharpai and sesame seeds are placed over the palms of the performer, then the wife / relative slowly pours water over this and collects them in a vessel.

Then the priest is offered the following things along with dhakshanai and sent off.

Pavithram, poonool, kamandalam (water pot), uruthiratcham (rudraksha), paadhukai (sandals), dhandam (walking stick), Kowbeenam (loin cloth), Vibhuthi pai (a sachet of sacred ash), Yogapattam (a kind of cloth), Kudai (umbrella), Kulla (hat), melvastram (shawl), vastram (dhoti), gold, ring, Rathinam (gems), ghee, butter, cattle, a piece of land, food products, grains, beauty products.

After he leaves, the place is purified by sprinkling turmeric water. The performer then washes his hands and feet (or takes a bath) and continues with the rest of the kiriyas.

Maasiyam

Maasiyams are the rites performed during the first year of death. It is performed monthly on the same Thithi (lunar day) as that on which the death occurred. However, you have to perform 15 Maasiyams within that year. Ekhothittam (one of the

Maasiyams) is performed on the 31st day, and four other Maasiyams are peformed as follows:

Oona Maasiyam	-	between the 27th and 30th day from death.
Oonathirpatcha Maasiyam	-	between the 40th and 45th day from death.
Oonasaan Maasiyam	-	between the 170th and 180th day from death.
Oonaapthika Maasiyam	-	between 350th and 355th day from death.

The other 10 Maasiyams are each performed on the specific Thithis throughout the year. If this is not possible, then all the 15 Maasiyams can be performed together on the 31st day.

Sodha kumba Sirartham

To quench the thirst of the deceased, a vessel filled with water is given as charity to the priest.

Sabindikaranam

Gathering the pindams together is known as Sabindikaranam. The Sabindikaranam is classified into two, namely the 'Parvana vidhaanam' and the 'Ekhothitta vidhaanam'. The Parvana vidhaanam is performed for the father, mother, father's brother and his wife, grandfather and grandmother. The Ekhodhitta vidhaanam is performed for the husband/wife, brother, son, daughter, uncle and aunt. If the grandparents are alive when performing the Sabindikaranam for the father or mother, then the 'Ekhodhitta vidhaanam' is done.

Ekhothitta vidhaanam is performed with 1 pindam for the deceased (Nimitha pindam). Parvana vidhaanam is performed with 4 pindams (the Nimitha pindam and 3 pidhirvarkam pindams). If the deceased is a male, then the 3 pidhirvarkam pindams are for his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. If the deceased is a female, then they are for her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

8 priests are invited home. 2 of them are denoted as Viswadevars (sit facing east), 1 as Adhidhi and another as Appiyakadhar (both also face east), 3 as Pidhirdevars (face North), and 1 as Nimithar (faces west). Vessels are placed before each of them. The performer wears a poonool over his left shoulder, fills the vessels before the Viswadevars with paddy, and then worships them. Next, he wears the poonool over his right shoulder, fills the vessels placed before the Pidhirdevars with sesame seeds, and then worships them. After this, poojas are done for the Nimithars and the Adhidhi Appiyakadhars, and then they are offered vastrams (dhoti and shawl), rice, vegetables, and dhakshanai.

Viswadevars - *Nandhidevar and Mahakaalar (devotees of Lord Siva).*
Pidhirdevars - *Kandhar (father), Sandar (grandfather) and Ganatheesar (great - grandfather).*
Adhidhi - *An unknown person.*
Appiyakadhar - *A known person.*
Nimithar - *The deceased.*

A plantain leaf is placed in front of them with its tip facing south. On this, the performer places 2 dharpais side by side with its' tips pointing south, and then scatters sesame seeds. He then faces the south and places his left palm and left knee on the floor. With his right hand he takes each of the 3 pidhirvarkam pindams, and passing under the left hand he places them on the right dharpai

in a north to south direction. The Nimitha pindam should be slightly bigger than the pidhirvarkam pindams, and this should be placed the same way onto the left dharpai. Then he gets up and puts chanthanam, kumkum and flowers on the pindams. If the deceased is a male, then the pindams are surrounded by a dhoti, if the deceased is a female, then by a saree. The products such as cooked rice and curries, curd, payasam, milk, tender coconut water, chakkarai pongal (sweet rice), palakarams (sweets), fruits, betel leaves and areca nuts are placed nearby. The dhoopa dheepa pooja is done, and then the relatives put flowers and sprinkle water on the pindams. The Saramakavi (kalvettu) and Thirumurais are recited, and the performer performs dharpanam. The flower on the Nimitha pindam is taken and placed on the pidhirvarkam pindams, which means that the deceased had joined his/her ancestors. Then all the 4 pindams are gathered together and placed in the dharpanam vessel. The pindams are then offered to a cow, or released into the river/sea.

Finally, dhakshanai is offered to the priest, and the priest blesses the performer with the chanthanam bindhi and sprinkling akshadai. Then food is consumed with relatives and friends.

Aapthikam / Aatai Thivasam *(First year rites)*

As this is performed at the end of the first year, ie. on the last Thithi of the year, it is known as Aatai Thivasam. The Aparakiriyas performed to the dead are completed with the Aatai Thivasam.

Varuda Sirartham *(Ceremony performed every year)*

Sirartham means the ceremonies performed with sirathai (care). The Sirartham is performed every year on the same Thithi as that, on which the death occurred. While performing Sirartham for the father, four pindams are offered ie. to the father, grandfather, great grandfather

and ancestors respectively. While performing Sirartham for the mother, three pindams are offered ie. to the mother, paternal grandmother, paternal great-grandmother and ancestors respectively.

On the day of Sirartham, it is significant to perform abishekam, archanai and lighting a lamp in a temple, and also feeding a cow. During the Sirartham, the Thirumurais are recited to please the ancestors. Churning milk, pounding rice, buying or giving oil and paddy should be avoided on this day.

The flowers and leaves used for Sirarthams

Vilvam, Thulsi, Arugu, Shenbagam, Thamarai (lotus), Punnai, Mullai, Nandhiyavartham, Marikozhundhu, Vettiver, Etti.

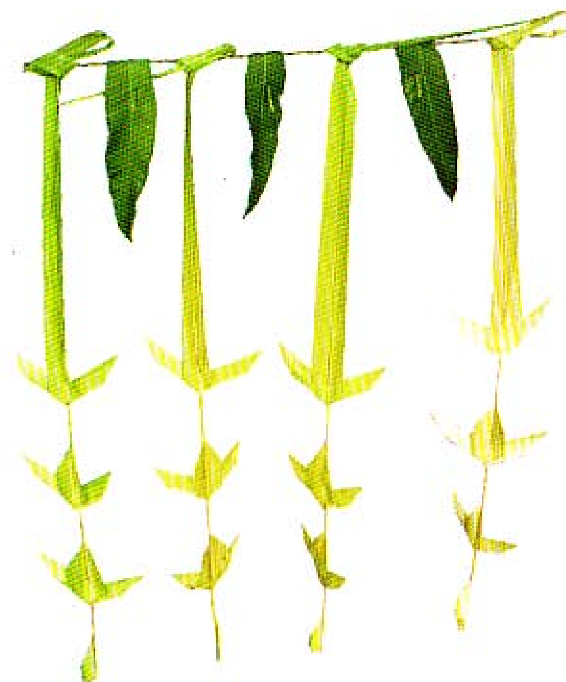
The products used for Sirartham

Rice, wheat, paddy, moong dhal, urid dhal, sesame seeds, sugar, jaggery, honey, gingelly oil, cow's milk, curd, ghee, arappu, banana, pepper, cumin seeds, turmeric, mustard seeds, salt, tamarind, plantain leaf, the trunk of the plantain tree, mango, jackfruit, coconut, tender coconut, bitter-gourd, radish, kekari, cucumber, gooseberry, lime, ginger, dry ginger, spinach, field beans, snake-gourd, nalli kizhangu, sirru kizhangu, seppang kizhangu, seppang thandu, pirandai, mullai leaves, musuttai leaves, karrai leaves, curry leaves, betel leaves, acrea nuts, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg and mace .

Maalayam

Maalayam, also known as Mahalayam, means the kiriyas performed for pidhirs.

Those who do not know the Thithi, or forgot, or were unable to perform the Varuda Sirarthams, can perform it either on the New moon day or during the Maalaya Patcham. Maalaya Patcham is the waning period of the moon from Prathamai (day after Full moon day) to Amavaasai (New moon day) in the month of Purattasi. It is done in order to satisfy the ancestors and for the upliftment of their souls.



Adhithi (guests) and pidhir (ancestors) poojas

This is explained in the Vedhas. Hindus give much importance to the hospitality of guests, but nowadays this is not possible. Hence, our ancestors have made an alternative, which is to offer food to the crows. This is known as adhithi and pidhir poojas. People offer food to crows during Thivasams (death anniversaries), and on Saturdays (as crow is the mount of Saturn). If this is followed daily, then they get the benefits of performing adhithi and pidhir poojas, and also the blessings of Saturn.

Answers by Sri Jayendra Swamigal

* **Food is offered to crows after poojas, and also on auspicious days, ie. Amavaasai etc. What is the philosophy behind this?**

  It is a customary and an auspicious act to offer food to the crows. The other birds and animals do not share food, whereas the crows call the other crows to share its food. The Puraanas state the benefits of offering food to crows.

* **Why perform Pidhirkadan (rites for ancestors), if there are rebirths?**

  Even though there are rebirths, we have to perform pidhirkadan, as they gave birth to us and brought us up as a human being. The pidhirkadan is also performed for their happiness in their next births.

* **What happens after death?**

  After death, he/she is judged on the good and bad deeds performed during his/her life, and thus experiences the results in the next birth.

* **What is the alternative for performing Thivasam?**

  Feeding the cows.

* **Can we hang the pictures of the dead along with the Gods pictures?**

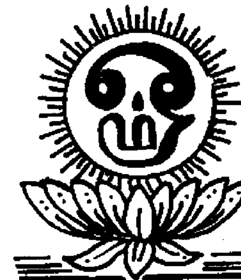
  It should not be hanged along, but in a row below the Gods pictures, or in a separate place.

Chapter 3

Om



'Om' is the most sacred symbol in Hinduism, and is also known as the Pranava mantra. It is the basic, initial sound from which the whole Universe evolved. Om symbolises the Brahman (the Absolute) by both sound and form. The Omkaram embodies in it, all the words symbolising the God in all languages at all times.



The Omkaram is comprised of the three letters 'Aa', 'U', and ' Ma', which when combined becomes Aum or Om. Aum is the essence of theVedhas and its theme. It is the basis of all mantras, and is always uttered first before chanting any Vedhic mantras.

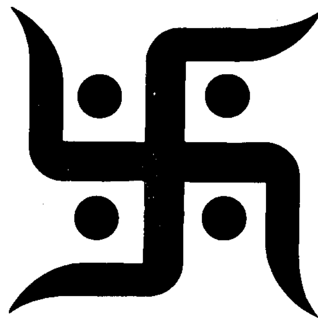
The letters 'A', 'U' and 'M' come from Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedhas respectively. The 'A' signifies the Almighty, 'U' denotes the soul, and 'M' implies that the soul should always serve the Lord. It is also said that 'A' symbolises Creation, 'U' denotes Protection, and 'M' signifies Destruction. Thus, it represents the Thrimurthis Brahma, Vishnu and Siva respectively.

Pillaiyar suzhi (உ)

The Pillaiyar suzhi is marked by combining a circle (o) and a line (-) symbolising the sound form and written form respectively. The sound form is known as 'Nadham' (primordial sound), and the written form is known as 'Vindhu' (unified form of the soul, mind, and lust). The Pillaiyar suzhi symbolises all the languages, which are made up of circles and lines. The Pillaiyar suzhi is marked on top of the page, before starting to write, as a symbol of Lord Vinayakar to remove any obstacles.

Swastika

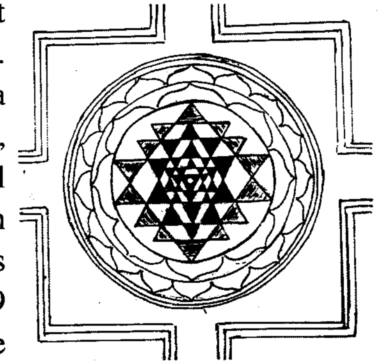
The Swastika is an auspicious symbol. It signifies 'Nannimitham' (good omen), and is a symbol of both Vishnu and Surya.



The Swastika denotes the Chakra world rotating around the Lord. It is marked outside homes and buildings to protect from any dangers caused by nature. It also protects from evil eyes.

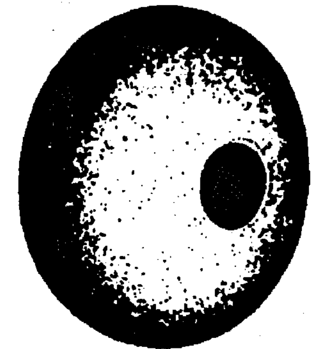
Sri Chakra / Yantra

The Sri Chakra is one of the most complex symbols, and it represents all the Divinities. Worshipping the Sri Chakra bestows success, wealth, prosperity, and protects from evil influences. It is usually engraved on copper sheets. The Sri Chakra is comprised of the intersection of 9 traingles, where 4 triangles face upwards and 5 triangles face downwards, signifying Siva and Sakthi respectively. The centre point of the Sri Chakra denotes goddess Adhiparasakthi.



Salagramam

Salagramam (a rare stone) symbolises Lord Vishnu. It is found on the banks of river Kandaki, in Nepal. It is a unique stone mainly black in colour. It is found in different shapes and structures, and has a hole. The markings seen through the hole are a replica of Lord Vishnu's chakram. It is a very powerful stone and bestows happiness and benefits when worshipped in homes.





Mantras

Vinayaka

Shuklam Bharatharam Vishnum Sasi Varnam Sathurpujam
Prasanna Vathanam Thyaye Sarva Vignoba Shanthaye.

Vakratunda Mahakaya Surya Koti Samaprabha
Nirvighnam Gurume Deva Sarvakaaryeshu Sarvada.

Mooshika Vaahana Modhaka Hasta
Samara Karna Vilampitha Sutra
Vamana Roopa Maheshwara Puthra
Vigna Vinayaka Patha Namasthe.

Vinayaka Gayathri

Om Tatpurushaaya Vidmahe
Vakratundaaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Thanthi Prachodayaath.

Siva

Gurave Sarvalogaanaam
Pishajay Pavaroginaam
Nithaye Sarva Vidhyanaam
Sri Dhakshinamoorthaye Nama.

Murugan

Om Shadananam Kumkuma Rakthavarnam
Mahamathim Divya Myuravahanam
Rudhrasya Sunum Suranasanya Natham
Kugam Sathaham Saranam Prapathye.

Murugan Gayathri

Om Tatpurushaaya Vidmahe
Mahasenaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Shanmuga Prachodayaath.

Ambikai

Sarva Mangala Mangalye Sive
Sarvaartha Sathake
Saranye Thiryambake Gowri
Narayani Namostuthey.

Ambikai Gayathri

Om Kaathyayanaaya Vidhmahe
Kanyakumari Dheemahe
Tannoh Durge Prachodayaath.

Vishnu

Shantakaram bhujaka sayanam
Padmanaabham suresham
Vishwadhaaram gaganasadrusham
Mehavarnam subangham
Lakshmikantham kamalanayanam
Yoghirdhyaana kamyam
Vande Vishnum bhava bhaya haram
Sarvalokaika naatham.

Vishnu Gayathri

Om Narayanaya Vidhmahe
Vasudevaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Vishnu Prachodayaath.

Guru

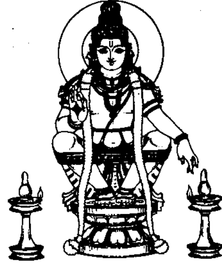
Dhyaana moolam Gurur Moorthim
Pooja Moolam Gururpatham
Manthramoolam Gurur Vaakyam
Mokshamoolam Gururkripa.

Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu
Gurur Devo Maheshvaraha
Gurur Sakshat Para Brahma
Tasmai Sree Gurave Namaha.

Brahma Gayathri

Om Vothmagaaya Vidhmahe
Hiranya Garbhaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Brahma Prachodayaath.

Aiyappan Gayathri



Om Bhootha naathaya Vidhmahe
Bhava nanthanaaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Saastha prachodayaath.

Dhakshinamoorthy Gayathri

Om Dhakshinamoorthayesa Vidhmahe
Dhyanasthaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Dheesa Prach odayaath.

Aanjaneya

Rama Rama Namosthuthe
Jeya Rama Pathra Namosthuthe
Rama Rama Namosthuthe
Jeya Veera Rama Namoshthuthe
Aanjaneya Namosthuthe
Vainatheya Namosthuthe.



Aanjaneya Gayathri

Om Aanjaneya Vidhmahe
Vayuputhraaya Dheemahi
Tannoh Hanumanth Prachodayaath.

Shanthi Slokam

Asato maa Sadgamaya
Tamaso maa Jyotirgamaya
Mrityor maa Amirthamgamaya
Om Shanthi Shanthi Shanthi.

Tvameva maathacha pitha Tvameva
Tvameva banduscha saka Tvameva
Tvameva vidhya dravinam Tvameva
Tvameva sarva mama deva deva.

Gayathri Mantram



Om Bhur Bhuvah Svaha
That Savithur Varenyam
Bhargo Dhevasya Dheemahi
Dheeyo Yonah Prachodayaath

"Oh mother! Who subsists in all the three Kaalas (past, present and future), the three Lokas (heaven, earth and nether region), and the three Gunas (sathva, rajas and thamas), I pray to Thee, to illumine my intellect and dispel my ignorance just as the sunlight dispels all darkness. I pray to Thee to make my intellect serene, bright and enlightened".

The Gayathri mantra is the expansion of the pranava sound Om. It has all the divine powers and serves as a spiritual protection for us at all times. It is a universal prayer and should be recited with utmost devotion and correct pronounciation. Everybody and anybody can chant it.

The power of the Gayathri mantra, of which the presiding deity is Lord Surya, is boundless. The three names of Vedamatha Gayathri are Gayathri, Savithri, and Saraswathi. These three lie within us and symbolise the Thirikarna Suddhi (word, thought and action).

The meditation on Gayathri mantra is considered to be the commencement of the spiritual life. Gayathri mantra helps attain mental powers and sharpen our knowledge. It cures our physical and mental stress. Chanting it during miseries always generates good results. It can be chanted anywhere at anytime. If it is followed by chanting 'shanthi' three times, a peace of mind and good health can be acquired.

Mruthunjiya Maha Mantram



Thriyam Bagam Yaja Mahe
Suganthim Phushtim Vardhanam
Uruvaruka Miva Bandhanath
Mrithyo Mushiya Mamrudhat
Om Hreem Namashivaya.

Lord Siva, the three-eyed and fragrant God, the one who protects the devotees with His grace, let us worship Him. His grace would protect us from death, like the riped cucumber that severes itself from its stalk. Let us not deviate from the Lord.



Pancha Puranam

Thiruchittambalam

It is a custom to intiate and end Thirumurais by saying 'Thiruchittambalam'. This is because Chidambaram is the holy place in which the 'Saiva Thirumurais' were revered and protected. Chidambaram is also the birthplace of music.

Thirumurais

Saint Nambiyandar Nambi compiled the holy book 'Thirumurais'. This is a collection of 12 anthologies, comprised of pure devotional hymns by South Indian Saivite saints.

Saint Thirugnanasambanthar composed the first three Thirumurais. Saint Thirunavukarasar composed the next three Thirumurais. Saint Sundaramoorthynayanar composed the seventh Thirumurai. These seven Thirumurais are termed 'Thevarams'.

Saint Manickavasagar composed the eighth Thirumurai, termed 'Thiruvasagam and Thirukovaiyar'.

Nine mystics composed the ninth Thirumurai, termed 'Thirvisaippa and Thirupallandu'.

Saint Thirumoolar composed the tenth Thirumurai, termed 'Thirumanthiram'.

Ten mystics composed the eleventh Thirumurai, and saint Sekhizhar composed the twelfth Thirumurai called Periya Puraanam.

The rich and diverse spiritual experiences of the saints are portrayed in these Thirumurais.

Thevaram

The word Thevaram has two meanings. 'The-aram' means the garland adorned on the Lord, and 'The-varam' means the song sung with devotion to the Lord. Out of the four saints of Saivism, Thirugnanasambandhar, Thirunavukarasar and Sundaramoorthy nayanar sang the Thevarams. They sang to Lord Siva with pure love and devotion.

Thiruvasakam

There is a saying "Thiruvasakathirku urugarthor, oru vasakathirkum uruhar" (those who are not moved by the Thiruvasakam, cannot be moved by anything). Saint Manickavasagar, one among the four saints of Saivite religion, sang the Thiruvasakam. The Thiruvasakam, which touches our hearts, has the significant feature of being written by Lord Siva. The word Thiruvasakam means `Thirumayamana vasakam'. Here, 'Thiru' refers to the grace of Lord, and 'vasakam' is the form of `Arul nadham' (gracious sound). This is the eighth Thirumurai. Lord Siva was enthralled to hear the Thiruvasakam and Thirukovai, and thus lent his hand in writing them. The Thiruvasakam comprises of 51 chapters and 656 songs, whilst the Thirukovai comprises of 400 songs.

Thiruvisaippa

Thiruvisaippa is the song praising the Lord, in conjuction with the divine nature of music. It was sung by nine poets with

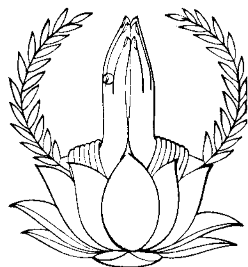
total commitment and pure devotion. It has the capacity to melt one's heart to find the divinity of the Lord. This has 303 songs, including 13 songs from the 'Thirupallandu' by Senthanar.

Thiruppallandu

Thirupallandu expresses the gracious acts of the Lord and blesses Him with longevity. Even the celestial beings greet the Lord by saying 'pallandu' to lead a prosperous life for themselves. As human beings we pray to the Lord in order to avoid rebirths and attain Salvation

Thirupuranam

The Periya Puranam, the 12th Thirumurai, is otherwise known as the Thirupuranam. Sekkizhar Swamigal sang this. This includes 2 kandams (divisions), 13 subdivisions and 4253 songs. Periya Puranam also includes the life history of 63 Saivaite saints.



Symbols of Lord Siva

Sacred Ash

The Saivities took the sacred ash (that cannot be destroyed) as a symbol, in order to acknowledge immortality.

As it gives wealth - it is called Boodhi
As it burns sins - it is called Pasmam
As it helps in the upliftment of soul - it is called Pasidham
As it protects us from dangers - it is called Rakshai

The benefits of wearing the sacred ash are as follows:

* A wealthy life
* Purification of the soul
* Purging our sins
* Destruction of miseries
* A pleasant and prosperous life
* Protects us from the influences of Boodham/Pisasu (evil spirits) and Rakshasa kanas (demons), and gives moksha (liberation).

The sacred ash should be worn by either facing the north or east. It should be worn on the forehead by tilting one's head backwards facing the sky. This is called 'Utthoolanam', which means wearing the dry sacred ash on the forehead. 'Thiripundaram' (3 horizontal lines) is the way of applying the sacred ash mixed with water, using the index. middle and ring fingers. It is significant for those who have obtained dheekshai to wear the sacred ash as Thiripundaram. The rest are expected to wear it as Utthoolanam.

The sacred ash should not be spilt on the ground. One should always receive the sacred ash with the right hand, while keeping the left hand beneath the right hand.

When everything is burnt in the fire of Gnana, that which remains would be the pristine purity of the philosophy of Siva. The sacred ash emphasizes the fact that everyone will one day end up as a handful of ashes after death. Hence, the sacred ash acknowledges that we should live without pride and Aanava, but with modesty and integrity.

Uruthiratcham / Rudraksham

The Uruthiratcham is the second symbol of Lord Siva. Myth has it that the Rudraksha beads/seeds were created from the tears of Lord Siva. 'Rudra' denotes the fierce form of Siva, and 'Aksham' symbolises his eyes.

The celestial beings, who underwent miseries by the demons of Thiripuram, meditated and observed fasts towards Lord Siva. Lord Siva, pleased by their devotion, looked intently at the demons continuously for a thousand years. As he keenly watched them, without even batting an eyelid, his eyes shed tears. 12 tear drops shed from the right eye, 14 from the left eye, and 10 from His third eye. These 36 teardrops transformed into 36 trees. The fruits of these trees are known as Rudraksham.

The beads are found in various colours. The white and gold belong to the class of Brahmins, the red to the class of Kshatriyas, the combination of white and red to the Vaisya class, and the black coloured beads to the Sutra class. The number of faces on the Rudraksham beads can vary from one to fourteen.

One face – Siva form. On wearing this the sin of killing a Brahmin will be removed.

Two faces - Siva-Sakthi form. Removes the sin of killing a cow.

Three faces - Agni form. Removes the sin of killing a woman.

Four faces - Brahma form. Removes the sin of killing a human.

Five faces - Kaala Rudra form. Removes the blemishes of an improper marriage, having relationships with immoral women, and telling lies.

Six faces - Muruga form. Removes the sin of killing the husband.

Seven faces - Adhisesha form. Removes the sin of killing a cow, killing in the war, and a woman aborting her embryo.

Eight faces - Vinayaka form. Removes the sin of consuming the food of others, a miserable mind, and theft of charity.

Nine faces - Vairava form. Removes the sin of killing a snake.

Ten faces - Thirumaal form. The fear of Stars, Planets, Boodham, Devils and Brahma Rakshadham would vanish.

Eleven faces - Ekadasa Rudra form. The benefits of 1000 Aswamedha yagas and also that of the charity of a 100,000 cows are acquired.

Twelve faces - Duvadasa Aditha form. The benefits of Aswamedha yagam, Komedha yagam, and the charity of gold are attained in immeasurable amounts.

Thirteen faces - Manmatha form. Wishes would be fulfilled, Victory in Rasavadham. The sin committed against the father, mother or brother is removed.

Fourteen faces - SivaSakthi form. This is extremely rare, and when worn, destroys all evil and elevates you to reach Moksha. Thus it is revered by the Devas and Sages.

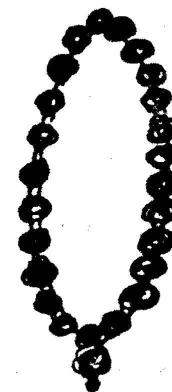
The number of Rudraksha beads worn:

upper arm -16; wrist - 12; crown – 1; ear – 6; head – 40; neck – 32 or 108.

The benefits of wearing the Rudraksha beads

The Rudraksha seeds have a unique, natural opening that is not found in any other seeds. While bathing with the Rudraksha chain, ailments such as cold, coughing, sneezing, and asthma can be cured. People suffering from high blood pressure have to bathe in cold water by keeping the Rudraksha beads on their head in order to bring down the pressure. Chest pains (ie. heart problems) can be cured by applying the paste of the Rudraksha beads (rubbed with water on a stone). By daily drinking the water in which the Rudraksha beads are soaked, the heat of the body is reduced.

Method of performing Jebams (Prayers)



Chanting a mantra using a Rudraksha bead is equivalent to chanting 10,000,000 mantras. The Rudraksha beads are strung in such a way, that the upper part of one bead touches the upper part of the other, and the lower part with the lower. The Jeba malai may have either 108, 54 or 27 beads. The Merumani (first bead) should always be strung from the top. While performing Jebams, the ascetics have to roll the beads upwards.

The performance of Jebams in a house, cowshed, garden, temple, forest, hill, or in the sannidhi of Lord Siva, gives the benefits of chanting one, two, ten, hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, or a million mantras respectively.

The performance of Jebams facing the East, West, and North results in the fulfilment of wishes, success in the desired task, and the curing and healing of illnesses respectively. Performing facing the South, results in Abisara Balidham (black magic causing evil).

Courtesy - Hindu Kalai Kalanchiyam

Panchatcharam

"Om Nama Sivaya"

The Panchatcharam (Om Nama Sivaya) is the third symbol of Lord Siva. This is known as 'Thiru Aindhu Ezhuthu' (5 letters). This should be expressed in our hearts at all times, and should be learnt

from qualified Gurus. The benefits of this mantra are the removal of karma, maya, and the fusion of the soul with the Lord. In Saivism, people who received dheekshais are qualified to chant this mantra.

There is also a saying that :

"Sivaayanama Endru Sindhithiruporkku Abaayam Oru Nallum Illai."
"Those who meditate on 'Sivaayanama' (name of Lord Siva) will not face any harm."

Sthula Panchatcharam - Nama Sivaya
Sukshma Panchatcharam - Sivaya Nama
Karana Panchatcharam - Sivaya Siva
Maha Panchatcharam - Siva
Maha Manu Panchatcharam - Si

Ten ways to lead a principled life

1. Worship the Lord when waking up in the morning.
2. Behave in a good and pleasing manner.
3. Do not think harm to others.
4. Help the hungry.
5. Before consuming food, give some food to others/ birds/ animals.
6. Go to bed chanting God's name.
7. Do not see, hear, speak or think evil things.
8. Give respect to elders and listen to their advice.
9. Love all.
10. Before sleeping, think of the good and bad deeds performed on that day, and try to correct yourself and become a better person.

The Significance of Coconut offering

The coconut water represents the vaasanas (inner tendencies), and the white kernel represents the mind. Thus we surrender our mind to the Lord by offering coconut. The coconut (ie.mind) purified by the Lord is then eaten as prasadham.

Each and every part of the coconut tree has a use. Thus offering the coconut also signifies our selfless service to the Lord.

When offering coconut, it is significant to break it into two halves, either with a knife or on a stone. These two halves should be placed facing the Lord.

Each part of the coconut symbolizes the following:

Green/orange husk – Maya
Fibre – Kanma
Shell – Aanava
White kernel – Lord
Coconut water – Grace of Lord

The white kernel is found only after the removal of the three outer layers. Hence, the coconut is broken in order to remove these three malas, and to be blessed with Gnana (knowledge).

The Samithus (firewood) used in Homams

Yerruku (Madar plant), Muruku (Palas), Karungali (Ebony), Nayuruvi (plant), Arasu (Pipal), Atti (Fig), Vanni (Indian Mulberry tree), Arugu (Cynodon dactylon), Dharpai Calotropis).

Homam products and their benefits

Arasu, sesame seeds, atti, white mustard, Ichchi (Strychnine), payasam, ajyam (ghee). Performing homam using these products removes any ill effects from evil spirits, trials and tribulations, and any harm caused by bhoodams and demons. By performing homam with milk, ghee and honey, a wealthier life is attained. By performing homam with sesame seeds, diseases are cured and siddhis are attained.

Diraviyams used in Homams

Palasu (Jack tree) - Increase in population
Sesame seeds - Mukthi (Salvation)
Karungali (Ebony) - Victory
Arasu (Pipal) - Wealth
Atti (Fig) - Pleasure
Sandalwood - Peace
Vanni (a kind of Indian tree) - Charm
Nayuruvi (a kind of plant) - Courage
Dharpai - Liberation
Urid (Black gram dhal) - Propagation of cattle
Puffed rice - Prosperity
Green gram - Long life
Paddy - Subjugative powers
Coconut - Success in everything
Ghee - Cures diseases
Yerrukku (Madar plant) - Prosperity
Arugampul - Courage
Muruku (Palas tree) - Grace of Lord
Vilvam (Bael tree) - Good health

The important Homams and their benefits

1. Sri Vanja Kalpa Ganapathy Homam - Wishes are fulfilled.
2. Sri Sudha Homam - Wealth.
3. Sri Chandika Homam - To get justice and victory in goverment affairs.
4. Amruthamrithyunchiya Homam - Long life.
5. Sudharsana Homam - To get rid off the fear of enemies and the removal of evil.
6. Sri Adharvana Badhrakali Homam - To get rid of the evil spirits.
7. Varuna Homam - For rain.
8. Sir Vidhya Homam - For the prosperity and peace of the country.
9. Navagraha Homam - To get rid off any bad influences caused by Grahas (planets).
10. Aava Handhi Homam - To get rid off poverty.

The benefits of Homams

The human mind attains peace by hearing the Homam sounds. The environment is purified and the invisible deadly germs are killed. The smoke from homam purifies our blood. The smoke also purifies the plants and gives good yields. The hearing of mantras chanted enhances our mental ability. The pure and fragranced air prevents nightmares. The Divine energy removes the fear of evil spirits and enhances memory, knowledge and intelligence.

The benefits of charity

Charity of Clothes - Long life
Charity of Land - Brahma's world is attained
Charity of Honey - Blessed with children
Charity of Gooseberries - Knowledge
Charity of Lamps - Higher postings are achieved
Charity of Seeds - Long life, growth of the lineage
Charity of rice - Removes sins
Charity of fruits - Liberation
Charity of blankets - Cures gastric problems
Charity of food - Wishes are fulfilled

Alternative pooja products

The Agamas state that the following products can be used as alternatives if the pooja products are not available:

1. Chakkarai for honey.
2. Curd / milk for ghee.
3. Milk for curd.
4. Gingelly oil for ghee used in Homams.
5. Akshadai for clothes, jewelleries, satram (umbrella), and saamaram (fur of deer).

Naivethyams for Navagrahas

Sun - Chakkarai pongal
Moon - Milk payasam
Mars - Pongal
Mercury - Tamarind rice
Jupiter - Curd rice
Venus - Ghee rice

Saturn - Sesame seed rice
Raghu - Urid dhal rice
Kethu - Variety of rice

The basic things required for poojas

1. Flowers
2. Betel leaves, areca nuts
3. Gumbenzoin (Saamprani)
4. Kumkum
5. Sandalwood paste
6. Incense sticks
7. Turmeric powder
8. Garland
9. Gingelly oil
10. Camphor
11. Akshadai
12. Chakkarai
13. Bananas
14. Rice
15. Coconut
16. Milk
17. Curd
18. Honey
19. Wick, matchbox
20. Mango leaves.

The vessels used for poojas

1. Pancha Paathiram (holy water cup)
2. Uttarini (spoon)
3. Brass tray
4. Dheepa kaal (lamp)
5. Camphor plate
6. Bell
7. Dhoopa kaal (for Saamprani)
8. Wooden plank
9. Kuththu vilakku (standing lamp)

The pooja leaves

Lord Siva - Vilvam (Bael)
Goddess Sakthi - Neem (Margosa)
Lord Vishnu - Thulasi (Sweet Basil)
Lord Ganapapthy - Arugampul (Cynodon grass)
Lord Brahma - Atti (Fig)
For all deities - Betel leaf

Abishekam

Abishekam is the holy bathing of idols in the temple. The things created by the Lord are returned to Him with devotion by performing Abishekams. The Abishekam is one amongst the Aradhanas performed at temples.

Lord Siva, in the form of fire, is pleased by Abishekams. The Vedha states that abishekam should be performed to cool down Lord Siva, in order to remove our miseries. Siddhantam states that abishekam cools His temper and brings about world peace. The Upanishad states that the soul should merge with Lord Siva, like the rivers merging with the sea. These philosophies are revealed through Abishekams.

The benefits of the products used in Abishekams

Oil (Gingelly oil) - Prosperous life
Taila abishekam (Sandalwood oil) - Gives happiness
Mapodi (raw rice flour) - Removes debts
Nelli mulli podi (Dried gooseberry powder) - Cures diseases
Turmeric powder - Charming power, good fortune
Jala Thiraviyam - Good health and prosperity
Panchakavyam - Purifies us, removes sins
Ghee – Victory and happiness
Milk - Gives liberation, peace and long life
Curd - Children, good health
Honey - Good health, sweet voice, grace of goddess Saraswathi
Sugar-cane juice - Cures diseases, healthy life
Chakkarai - Destroys enemies
Banana - Yields more grains
Mango - Children
Pomegranate - Removes anger

Narathai (type of orange) - Righteous conduct
Panchamirtham - Long life
Lime - Removes the fear of Yama
Annam (cooked rice) - Affluence
Tender coconut water - Prosperity and good children
Chanthanam - Grace of goddess Mahalakshmi
The water of vilvam (soaked bael leaves water) - Removes fear
Rose water - Fame
Kalasam water - Grace of Ashtalakshmi
Sacred ash - Knowledge
Jackfruit - Captivating the world (Ulagha vasiyam)
Water - Peace

(The benefits are same to whichever deity the Abishekam is performed to)

The Benefits of Poojas

Abishekam - Removes sins
Chanthana kaappu (applying chanthanam on idols) - Bestows all pleasures
Flowers - Comfort
Dhoopam - Sins are removed
Dheepam - Good health
Naivethyam (food) - Great pleasures
Thamboolam (betel leaf and areca nut) - Grace of goddess Mahalakshmi
Jebams - Ashta Iswaryams (8 types of wealth) are obtained
Homam - Libration
Anna Dhaanam (Food charity) - Satisfies all celestial beings
Namaskaram (Prostration) - Gives Aram (Righteous conduct), Porul (Wealth), Inbam (Pleasure) and Veedu (Salvation)

The Structure of a Temple

The structure of the temple resembles the human body. This is to remind us that our body is the temple of God. Imagine the body of a man lying on his back, with his head on the west side, and his feet towards the east. The body parts symbolise the following structures of the temple:

Feet - Main Gopuram
Knees - Asthaana Mandapam (entrance hall)
Thigh - Nirudha/Sabha Mandapam (music/dance performance hall)
Navel - Balipeedam
Chest - Maha Mandapam (Natarajar)
Neck - Artha Mandapam (Nandhi)
Head - Sanctum Sanctorum
Right ear - Dhakshinamoorthy (Guru/Jupiter)
Left ear - Sandeswarar
Mouth - The entrance of Sthabana Mandapam
Nose - Sthabana Mandapam
Centre of the Forehead - Sivalingam

What is Punniyagavasanam?

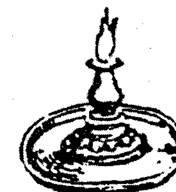
This is one of the kiriyas performed for Diraviya suddhi (purifying pooja vessels) and Thula suddhi (purifying the body). A kumbam is kept and Varunan (god of clouds and rain) is invoked in it. Fruits and thamboolam are offered, and a pooja is done. The camphor is lit and waved, and Varunan is bidded farewell. The water from the kumbam is then sprinkled all over the place where the ceremony took place.

The Philosophy of Lighting the Camphor

The camphor leaves no residues after burning. The camphor represents the ego in oneself. Thus the burning camphor symbolizes the burning of the ego, by the 'Atma jyothi' (flame of the soul). Once the ego is completely burnt, the Atma jyothi merges with the Brahma jyothi (Divine flame). The camphor also has a fragrance, which symbolizes the grace of the Lord.

Why Camphor Aarathi is performed?

The camphor aarathi is performed at the end of every pooja, to symbolise the surrendering of oneself to the Lord, in realizing that everything belongs to Him. It is always rotated three times in a clockwise direction, or in the form of the Tamil symbol 'ஓம்'.



In all other forms of poojas, there is always something left behind as prasadham, but the camphor aarathi is an exception to this leaving no residues. Thus it is a symbol of complete surrender and of utmost sacrifice.

The camphor dheepam is in the form of Agni (fire). When we touch it with both our hands and then touch our eyes, it implies that the light of knowledge passes through our eyes and illuminates our vision.

Why we offer money on the Camphor plate?

After touching the camphor jyothi and placing it on our eyes, our ignorance is removed and we become generous, hence we offer money.

The philosophy of Dhoopa Aradhanai

The dhoopa gives 'paramaanandam' (great joy) by removing evil influences. The dhoopa is used to symbolise the Kiriya Sakthi, which removes the fetter 'Aanava'. It is a must to show dhoopa after the completion of poojas. The fragrant smoke of the dhoopa is said to capitivate even the celestial beings. It drives away the evil spirits, removes yantras, and also kills germs.



The dhoopa products are incense sticks, gumbezoin (saamprani), Akhil (a fragrance tree), Kungiliyam (a type of resin). When the camphor, gumbezoin and incense sticks are lit, they give a fragrance by sacrificing themselves. Like-wise, we also have to sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of others.

Dheepa worship

The word 'jyothi' (flame) refers to everything that illuminates. The dheepam in the form of jyothi gives light and heat. The light removes darkness, and the heat burns ignorance. Thus, the dheepa worship is performed to remove the fetters of the soul and gain Gnana.

In Hinduism, Gods are worshipped by lighting a lamp in the morning and evening. In temples and homes, a pooja commences only after lighting the lamp. The Almighty is omnipresent in different forms, and lies in our hearts in the form of jyothi. Hence, dheepa worship is done in order to remove the worries and miseries in our hearts.

In the pooja room, the lamps should be placed over a copper/ brass plate, and the number of lamps should be in odd numbers ie. 1,3,5. The jyothi of the lamp should face east. It should not be allowed to burn out by itself or by blowing. At the end of the pooja wait for 11 minutes and then put it out using a flower.

Dheepa worship symbolises the Brahma Gnanam, the light, lit in the lamp of mind, using the ghee as knowledge, the wick as soul, and the air as prana, that removes the darkness of ignorance.

The philosophy of Dheepa Aradhanai

— Dheepa aradhanais are performed to remove egotism and ignorance, and thus sparkle like the 'Gnana oli' (light of knowledge). In temples, they are performed with different types of dheepams. During dheepa aradhanais the different dimensions of the Lord in the Sanctum Sanctorum can be witnessed in the light of the different dheepas.

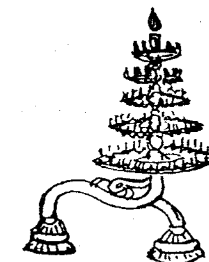
There is a reason behind each type of dheepa aradhanai. They reveal the birth of all beings due to the grace of God. Though there are many dheepas, they denote the oneness of the Lord.

The Poorna Kumba dheepam symbolises the entirety (poornathuvam), where the kumbam represents the universe, and the dheepam in it represents the Sakthi who makes the universe function. The five dheepa plates shown along with the Kumba dheepam, symbolise the 5 faces of Siva (Esanam, Thatpurusham, Agoram, Vamadevam and Sathyosadham). Thus, the dheepams in different forms carry different powers. Camphor, wick, cloth, cotton, or thread can be used for dheepa

The different types of Aradhanais performed in Temples

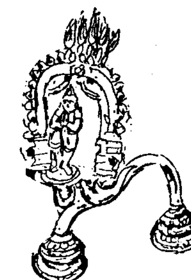
1. Dhoopam - Gives Gnana, removes sins
2. Five-pile Alankara Dheepam - Denotes the Pancha Boodhams
3. Three-pile Dheepam - Removes the three Malas
4. Naga (snake) Dheepam - Blessed with children
5. Vrishaba/Idaba (bull) Dheepam - Propagation of cattles
6. Purusha Dheepam - Gives power
7. Natchathira (star) Dheepam - Cures diseases and gives good health
8. Yaanai (elephant) Dheepam - Gives wealth
9. Aamai (tortoise) Dheepam - Removes the fear of water
10. Anna (swan) Dheepam
11. Kudhirai (horse) Dheepam
12. Mayil (peacock) Dheepam - Blessed with children
13. The Poorna Kumbam Dheepam with five dheepa plates - Removes the Malas
14. Kozhi (hen) Dheepam
15. Singham (lion) Dheepam - Long life
16. Karpoora (camphor) Dheepam
17. Meru (mountain) Dheepam - Liberation
18. 7 branches of the camphor Aarathi - Denotes the Saptamathas
19. Kudai (umbrella) - Denotes the Moon
20. Kodi (flag) - Denotes Brahma
21. Visiri (fan) - Denotes Vaayu (God of Wind)
22. Kannaadi (mirror) - Denotes the Sun
23. Alavattam (circular shaped cloth/palm leaves) - Denotes Indiran
24. Saamaram (fur of deer) - Denotes Mahalakshmi

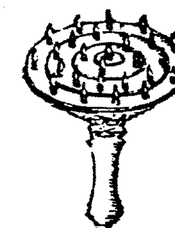

Dhoopa


Five - pile Alankara Dheepa

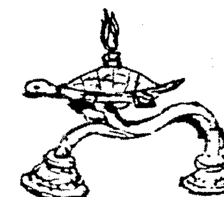

Naga Dheepa


Virishaba Dheepa


Purusha Dheepa

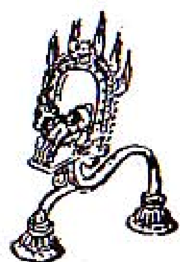

Natchathira Dheepa


Yaanai Dheepa

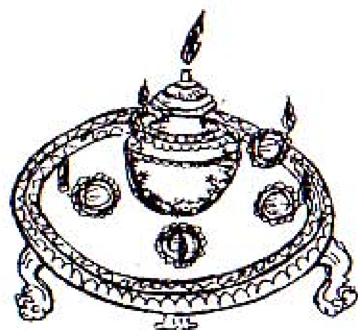

Aamai Dheepa


Karpoora Dheepa


Seven -Branched Camphor plate



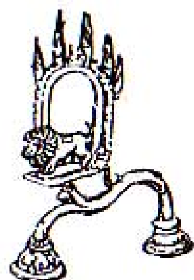
Kudhirai Dheepa



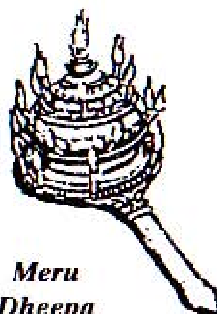
Poorna Kumbam & 5 Dheepas



Saamaram



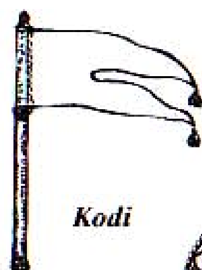
Singham Dheepa



Meru Dheepa



Alavattam



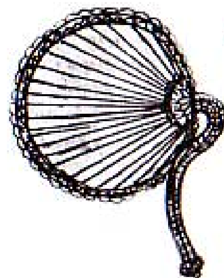
Kodi



Kudai



Kannaadi



Visiri

Maavilakku Pooja



Women perform this pooja for the prosperity of their families. Raw rice (powdered), tender coconut water, sugar, cardamom powder and dry ginger powder are mixed together. This is then shaped like the Kamakshi vilakku, and then lit using a wick and ghee.

It is a practice, even today, to light the Maavilakku when wishes are fulfilled. After the pooja is complete, it is distributed as prasadham to everyone.



The Kuththu Vilakku

When the kuththu vilakku is lit, we experience the divinity, which brightens our pooja room. The kuththu vilakku has a unique structure.

The Base

As this part is broad and spherical shaped, resembling the Lotus, it denotes Brahmadevi on the Lotus.

The Stem

This is lean and tall like a pillar, and hence denotes Mahavishnu, who measured the earth and sky with his feet in Vamana Avatar.

The Agal

The upper part of the stem is like an Agal (cup), and is filled with ghee/oil, denoting Urudhran who adorns the river Ganges on his head.

The Eyes of the Lamp

The five eyes on which the wicks burn denote the Pancha mugam (5 faces) of Maheswaran (ie. Esanam, Vamadevam, Sathyosadham, Thatpurusham, Agoram). They also symbolise the five characteristics essential for a woman ie. love, moderation, tactfulness, determination and tolerance.

The Upper stem

As this resembles the kumba kalasam, it denotes Sadhasivam.

Oil - The ghee found in Agal refers to the Nadha (sound), which is formless and fills up space.

Wick - This represents the Vinthu in the Hindu philosophy or white light.

Flame - This is considered as the form of Mahalakshmi.

Light - As it is bright, it symbolises the Gnana form of Saraswathi.

Heat - As it has the power to burn, it denotes the destructing force of Rudhrani.

The artistic features of the lamp refer to Ganapathy, Murugan, Rama and Krishna.

The lamp can be decorated with turmeric, chanthanam, kumkum and flowers.

The flame should not be put off quickly after the pooja. It should be put out using a flower, or the burning wick should be slowly dipped in the oil. The flame should not be blown out.

The oils used in Dheepams and their benefits

Coconut oil - Auspicious for Ganapathy. Acquires strength of mind.

Gingelly oil - Auspicious for Mahavishnu. Prosperous life, removes miseries and bad Graha influences.

Ghee - Auspicious for Mahalakshmi. Receives Her Grace, acquires wealth and good health, and removes bad Graha influences.

Castor oil - Receives the Grace of the family deity, fame, prosperous life, and good relatives.

Neem oil - Receives the blessings of Rudra Devas.

Mahua oil - Receives the blessings of Amman and Kalidevi.

Groundnut oil - Should not be used.

When the lamp is lit by mixing ghee, Mahua oil and neem oil, it bestows a wealthy life.

The blessings of Devi and mantra powers are acquired by lighting the lamp with the mixture of ghee, castor oil, neem oil (or gingelly oil), Mahua oil and coconut oil.

Lord Sanneeswara is pleased when an iron lamp is lit with gingelly oil on Saturdays.

The wicks used in Dheepams and their benefits

The wick made out of Cotton - Healthy life.
The wick made out of a Lotus stem - Wealth, removes the sins of previous births.
The wick made out of a Plantain stem - Blessed with children, removes evil spirits.
The wick made out of a White cloth - Good effects, wealth.
The wick made out of a Yellow cloth - Grace of Ambikai, prosperous life.
The wick made out of a Red cloth - Removes obstacles in marriage, blessed with children.

It is significant to use a wick with 7, 14, 16 or 21 strands. When lighting the lamp at home, it is significant to use a cotton wick.

The direction for lighting the Dheepam and its benefits

East - Miseries and bad Graha influences are removed.

West - Debts, enemies, bad Graha and Sani influences are removed.

North - A prosperous life, obstacles in marriage are removed, knowledge is gained and auspicious events will take place.

South - The lamp should not be lit in this direction.

Lighting the eyes of the Dheepams and their benefits

Lighting one eye - Average benefits
Lighting two eyes - Family remains united
Lighting three eyes - Gives healthy children
Lighting four eyes - Blessed with cattle and land
Lighting five eyes - Prosperous life

The Lamps

The lamps made out of soil, bronze, silver, or brass are used. It is not significant to use stainless steel lamps. When placing the lamps on the floor, they should be kept on a plate or a plantain leaf.

Lighting a Bronze lamp - Sins are removed.
Lighting an Iron lamp - Gives good friends.

Why we hoist the flag on the kodimaram?

The flag is hoisted in a temple on the first day of the festival. The picture on the flag would be that of the mount of the main deity. Hoisting the flag symbolises the upliftment of the soul by the Almighty. It also implies the fact that the Almighty is the Head of the Universe.

Ther Thiruvizha *(Chariot festival)*

The chariot processions take place at the end of the festival. The structure of the chariot symbolises the body. It reveals that the Lord is graciously present in the chariot as well as our body.

The philosophy of the Prakaram *(courtyard)*

The number of prakarams in a temple may vary. The devotees first go around the outer prakaram, then the inner prakaram, and then the innermost prakaram, and finally reach the Sanctum Sanctorum. This signifies the removal of worldly desires and nearing the Almighty.

The Vimana (central tower of the temple)

The Vimana is built above the sanctum sanctorum to protect the main deity from rain and heat. It also symbolises the Grace of God.

Dharpai *(Kusa grass)*

The dharpai is used in all the ritual ceremonies of Hinduism. It is not affected by wet or dry conditions. The soul does not arise out of a seed, like-wise the dharpai also grows without a seed. Hence, dharpai symbolises the soul.

The Philosophy of the sacred yellow thread *(Manjal kairu)*

The Thali can be tied with a sacred yellow thread. This thread comprises of 9 strands that denote the following:

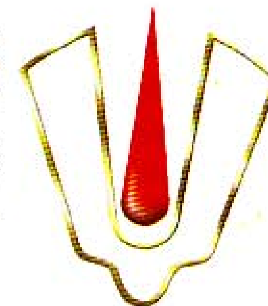
1. To understand life as it is
2. Excellence
3. Power
4. Purity
5. Divine thinking
6. Good character
7. Wisdom
8. Self control
9. Service

Blessings with Akshadai *(Arugarisi)*

Akshadai is the mixture of raw rice (unbroken), turmeric powder and arugampul. It is used for blessings by elders. During weddings,when blessing the married couple, Akashadi should be taken with both hands and sprinkled on their heads first, then shoulders, knees and feet respectively, or just on their heads. This indicates the blessings of the Devas from the sky.

(During Apara kiriyai (funeral rites) and Pidhirkadan (ancestral rites) it is done in reverse, ie. from the feet to the head, which symbolizes that the soul attains Mukthi towards the sky.)

Thirumann *(Naamam)*



The Thirumann is worn on the forehead by Vaishnavites in the shape of the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu. It is made of Gopi chanthanam (a type of sand). The Thirumann reveals that the lotus feet of Parandaaman (Lord Vishnu) is the only destination for the soul. The Chenduram (red mark) in the centre denotes Mahalakshmi.

Thulasi *(Sweet Basil)*



The word 'Thulasi' means 'peerless'. It is believed that Lord Vishnu will be present wherever there is Thulasi (form of goddess Mahalakshmi). Thulasi has the warmth that can cure diseases and remove sins. The Thulasi theertham (equivalent to Ganges water) is distributed as prasadham in Vishnu temples.

Vilvam *(Bael)* tree



The Vilvam leaves are a favourite of Lord Siva's. The shape of the Vilvam leaf symbolises the Thrisoolam held by Lord Siva and also his three eyes. Performing pooja to Lord Siva with the Vilvam removes sins and gives liberation.

Arugampul *(Cynodon grass)*



The arugampul is a favourite of Lord Ganapathy's. The arugampul continues to sprout even after being cut in the middle. It is used to cure many diseases. The soul does not arise out of a seed, like-wise the arugampul also grows without a seed. Even if the body is destroyed, the soul is unaffected. Hence, offering arugampul denotes the offering of our soul to the Lord.

Thiruneettupatchai *(Basil)*

This is used for poojas like the Thulasi. It is also used in poojas for Lord Siva.

Neem / Vepam *(Margosa)* tree

The Neem leaves are a favourite of goddess Maariyamman's. It gives a cooling effect and can destroy germs. The Neem is known as 'Sarvaroga Nivarani' (panacea).



When a person is suffering from a disease (ie. chicken pox), the neem leaves are tied at the house entrance. This is to let others know that a person of that family is ill. The neem paste is then smeared on the body of the sick person. A girl attaining puberty is given neem paste to consume.

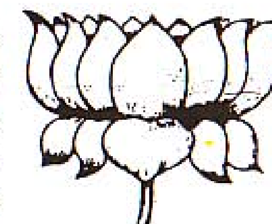
Thala Virutcham (Temple tree)

There is a particular tree for each temple. In ancient times, the temples were built in places where:

1. Miracles took place.
2. God appeared.
3. Saints and Rishis meditated.

The trees under which the Rishis meditated and attained Mukthi became the Thala Virutchams. These trees are worshipped.

Lotus



The Lotus is considered as the divine flower. Mahalakshmi, consort of Mahavishnu, appeared from the lotus (padhmam), and hence she is called Padhmavathy. The lotus is found in the three colours red, white and blue symbolising the Thrimurthis. Though the creeper of the lotus is one, it has three kinds of flowers. Like-wise, though the Almighty is one, He resides in three places, performing three different functions under three different names.

White Lotus - Brahma and Saraswathi (Creation)
Red Lotus - Mahavishnu and Mahalakshmi (Protection)
Blue Lotus - Siva and Parvathi (Destruction)

Grahas	Mounts	Tastes	Grains
Sun	Peacock	Hot	Wheat
Moon	Pearl Vimanam	Sweet	Paddy
Mars	Swan, Cock	Astringent	Toor dhal
Mercury	Horse, Fox	Salty	Moong dhal

Jupiter	Elephant	Sweet	Bengal gram
Venus	Hawk,Horse,Cow	Sweet	Field beans
Saturn	Crow, Buffalo	Bitter	Sesame seeds
Raghu	Sheep	Sour	Urid dhal
Kethu	Lion	Sour	Horse-gram

Some philosophies

* After tying the Thirumangalyam, the bridegroom applies kumkum on the centre of the bride's hairline, as this is the place where goddess Mahalakshmi resides. This is to reveal that the bride belongs to him.

* The musical instruments (ketti melam) are played during the Thirumangalya Thaaranam to avert the couple from hearing anything inauspicious.

* When tying the Thirumangalyam with the sacred yellow thread, the three knots tied denote the following:

  First knot - She is devoted to her husband.
  Second knot - She is devoted to her in-laws.
  Third knot - She is God-fearing.

* While tying the Thirumangalyam, akshadai is sprinkled on the head of the couple to bless them with a prosperous life and to protect them from evil spirits. A lady holds a lamp behind the couple to prevent bad omens, and she also serves as a witness to the marriage.

Why the bride wears a veil during the marriage?

In earlier days, the bride does not see the bridegroom until the Thirumangalyam is tied. Therefore, she is brought to the manavarai wearing a veil. It is also done to avoid evil eyes and critics. After the groom ties the Thirumangalyam, she removes the veil and reveals her face to the guests with the recognition that she is a married woman.

Why we rotate the Dheepa thrice?

The Agamas state that the dheepa is rotated three times for the welfare of the universe, the village and the souls respectively.

The Prasadhams *(sacred ash, chanthanam, kumkum)*

When receiving prasadhams at the temple, first we have to smear the sacred ash on our forehead by chanting 'SivaSiva'. Then the chanthanam is put on the centre of the forehead, and then the kumkum is kept over this. It is a sin to spill these on the ground.

How to wear the uthareeyam?

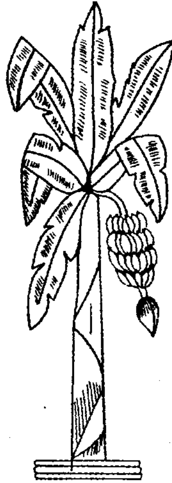
Men should wear the uthareeyam (long piece of cloth) over their left shoulder and tie it near the right hip. The saalwai (shawl) should also be worn over the left shoulder. This is because in the Arthanareeswarar form, goddess Uma is on the left side of Lord Siva, and hence it is covered in order to protect her.

During rituals on which hand is the kaappu/pavithram worn?

Men should wear the kaappu on their right wrist, and the pavithram on their right hand ring finger. Women should wear the kaappu on their left wrist, and the pavithram on their left hand ring

finger. This is because, as per the form of Arthanareeswarar, the god is on the right side, and the goddess is on the left side. Hence, women should wear the saree pallu, nose stud, and thread on the left side.

Plantain Tree



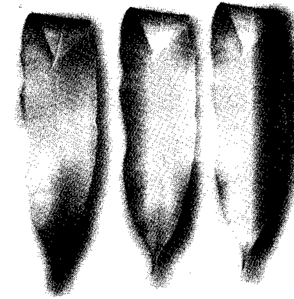
Two plantain trees are tied at the entrances of temples and houses during festive seasons. During auspicious events, two plantain trees bearing flowers and a bunch of bananas are tied. During inauspicious events, the two mondhans (a type of plantain tree) with a bunch of raw bananas are tied at the entrance to indicate mourning.

The philosophy of tying the plantain tree is for our lineage to prosper like the plantain trees. When offering bananas to the Almighty, the tips should be cut off. When placing a kumbam over a plantain leaf, the tip of the leaf should face either north or east. When eating, the tip of the plantain leaf (Thalaivazhai ilai) should be on your left side. During Apara kiriyas, the tip of the plantain leaf should face south.

Mango leaves

The mango leaves play a significant role during auspicious events in temples and houses. During Kumbabishekams, house-warmings, and other rituals, the purified water in the kumbams are sprinkled on the people and throughout the house using mango leaves. While performing homams, the mango leaves are used to pour ghee into the fire.

During auspicious events, a festoon of mango leaves is tied at the entrance. During festivals, when the place is crowded, the mango leaves help purify the air, and also destroys the germs in the air. The mango leaves also have some medicinal use. The wood of mango trees are used in homams.

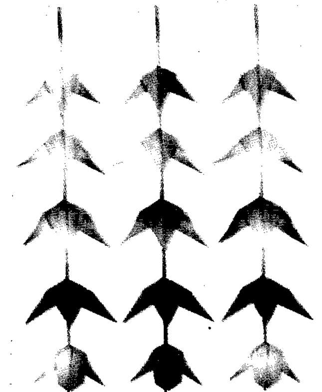


For auspicious events, the mango leaves should be folded forwards, symbolising the bowing of women as a sign of welcome.



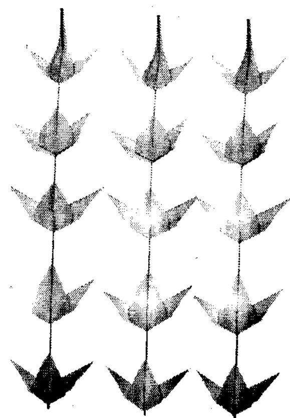
For inauspicious events, the leaves should be folded backwards.

Cocount palm leaves



Festoons and flags symbolise the celestial beings. The way in which the festoons are tied in the streets indicate the nature of the function.

For auspicious events, the leaves are folded downwards, symbolising the celestial beings coming down from the sky to participate in them.



For inauspicious events, the leaves are folded upwards, symbolising the celestial beings guiding the souls upwards to attain Moksha.

Kumkum

The kumkum is a symbol of the Hindu culture. It is very auspicious and possesses mantra powers. Applying kumkum on the forehead inbetween the eyebrows, protects us from the effects of evil eyes and hypnotism. Married women apply the kumkum at the centre of their hairline, as Goddess Mahalakshmi resides there.

The kumkum is auspicious to Goddess Sakthi, and hence we perform kumkum pooja. The kumkum is applied with either the right hand ring finger, or with both the thumb and index finger of the right hand. The ring finger (Surya finger) has an attractive power, and thus touching the forehead with that finger reduces heat.

Chanthanam (Sandalwood paste)

The chanthanam is also an auspicious product. It gives a cooling effect and has a fragrance. Applying chanthanam reduces the body heat and refreshes us. In temples, Chanthana Kavasams and Abishekams are done to the deities. This enhances the power of the idols and also confers the grace of goddess Lakshmi. The chanthanam has a significant place in all the events, such as in welcoming guests.

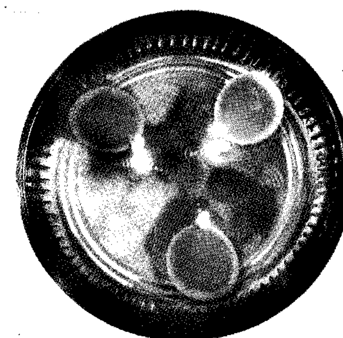
Turmeric (Manjal)

The turmeric is very auspicious and is used in many ways. A piece of turmeric is used as Thali in marriages. During auspicious events, Vinayakar models are made out of turmeric, and coconuts are smeared with turmeric. Turmeric water and slaked lime (chunnambu) are used in Aarathis to ward off evil eyes.

The turmeric acts as a germicide. Women apply turmeric everyday while bathing. Turmeric water is sprinkled to purify the house. In ancient times, turmeric was smeared on all four corners of marriage invitations to prevent the spreading of contagious diseases, such as cholera, inbetween villages.

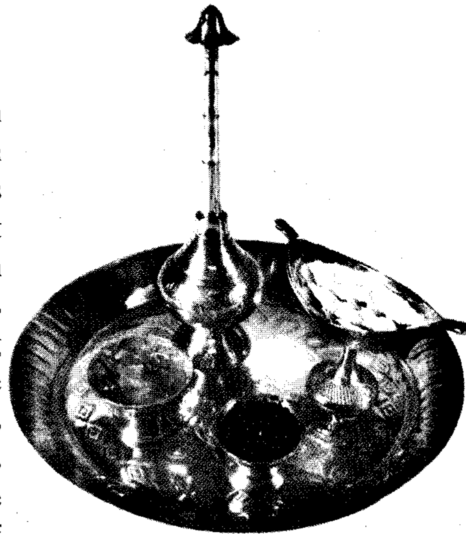
Lime

Lime is significant for divine worship. The taste of the lime is always sour, whether it is raw or ripe. Like-wise, one has to maintain a stable mentality in both joy and misery. This philosophy is revealed through lime.



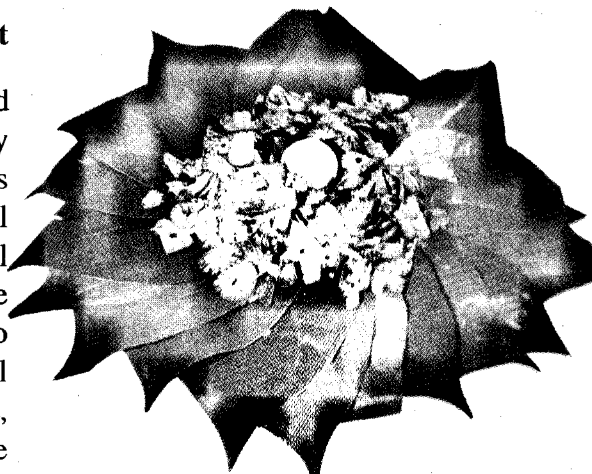
A garland of limes is adorned on Sakthi to be blessed with marriage and children. The juice extracted from these limes can be consumed. Lime is also used to remove the effects of evil eyes or when beginning a new task. During the Durga poojas on Tuesdays at Raghukala (3pm - 4.30pm), the lamp made from the peal of lime is lighted using wick and ghee (see picture). There is a belief that this would bring an early marriage.

Panneer (Rose water)



Panneer is made from panneer flowers. It is used in abhishekams, and also used as a fragrance. The panneer set (panneer, vibhuthi, chanthanam and kumkum), see picture, is placed at entrances during auspicious functions. Here, the panneer is sprinkled on guests when welcoming them. It gives a cooling effect like the chanthanam. The philosophy of the Panneer is that, one should lead a life in which one is appreciated as a person of noble character, like the fragrant Panneer that is loved by everyone.

Betel leaf and Areca nut



The betel leaf and areca nut are also very significant. As goddess Lakshmi resides in the betel leaves, it is used for all auspicious events. They are offered to the Lord to protect us from evil influences. During betrothals, it is a custom to exchange Nitchayathamboolam (betel leaves, areca nuts and chunnambu). The whole areca nuts should be used, otherwise the parings of it can be used. A garland of betel leaves is offered to Lord Hanuman to achieve success.

Poorna Kumbam



The Vedha states that the world, the beings, and the souls, all originate from water during Creation and subside in water during Pralaya (end of cosmos). This is signified by the Poorna kumbam.

The human body is symbolised by the Poorna kumbam as follows:
Kumbam (pot) - flesh; water - blood; navaratnam - bones; the thread woven around the pot - nerves; vastram (cloth) tied around the pot - skin; 5 mango leaves - 5 senses; coconut - head; koorcham - hair; plantain leaf and paddy (on which kumbam is placed) - aasanam (seat).

During rituals, the appropriate Gods are invoked in the poorna kumbams and then poojas are performed. The poorna kumbam, filled with water, should be placed over paddy/raw rice spread on a plantain leaf (Thalaivaazhai ilai). The tip of the plaintain leaf should face either north or east. Nutmeg, cloves, saffron, and medicated camphor are added to the kumba water to keep it clean. The kumbam is adorned with mango leaves (for the grace of Ashtalakshmi), a coconut, turmeric, kumkum, flowers, koorcham (a bunch of dharpai tied at one end), swarnam (a piece of gold put into kumba water) and akshadhai. The Poorna kumba water is purified through mantras consisting of powerful Srijaaksharangal, and the Lord is invoked in it. Then homams are performed, and the Lord is worshipped through meditation, jebams, and chanting mantras. No rituals are performed without a poorna kumbam.

Placing the Niraikudam

The Niraikudam is a poorna kumbam that is placed at the entrance during ceremonies, as a sign of welcome. A plantain leaf is placed, and paddy or raw rice is spread over it. The niraikudam (filled with water) is adorned with mango leaves and a coconut, and then placed on this. An idol of Lord Vinayaka (made of turmeric) is placed before the kumbam towards the left. When facing the kumbam from the front, the tip of the plantain leaf should be on the left side. A lighted lamp (kuththu vilakku) is placed on either side. A bunch of bananas, betel leaves, areca nuts, and a lime placed on a tray are kept on one side. The panneer set (chanthanam, kumkum, panneer and sacred ash) is kept on the other side (see picture). The niraikudam and the lamps can be decorated with garlands and flowers.



Worship of the Pancha Boodhas

Each of the Pancha Boodhas are worshipped by performing the following to the deities in temples:

Applying Chanthanam	- Earth
Dheepa Aradhanai	- Fire
Dhoopa Aradhanai	- Air
Offering Naivedhyam	- Water
Offering Flowers	- Space

The philosophy of the Irumudi

Devotees, who go on a pilgrimage to Sabarimalai for Aiyappa dharshan, carry an Irumudi (a bag with two separate compartments, tied with two knots) on their heads. The front compartment contains Abisheka products and a coconut filled with ghee, whilst the rear compartment contains food and personal belongings (worldly desires). By the time they reach the Sabarimalai Sannidhaanam, the contents of the rear compartment would be exhausted. Then they climb the 18 steps (path to liberation) and break the coconut (ego) and pour the ghee (soul) onto the idol of Lord Aiyappa. Then they leave after the abishekam with prasadhams. The philosophy behind this is that, as we approach God, our worldly desires would disappear and egos will be shattered, and after dharshan our sole possession would be His grace.

The Dwara Balakars (gate keepers)

The two Dwara Balakars are found on either side of the Sanctum Sanctorum in temples. One of the Dwara Balakars holds a raised index finger, revealing the oneness of God. The other one holds an open hand with his fingers spread out, revealing that the Lord is one and nothing more. The Vedha also states that "Eham Ehva Athvidheekam Brahma", which means that the Lord is only one.

Sivaroopam



The Sivaroopam reveals how to lead a life. The crescent moon on Lord Siva's head reveals that happiness and miseries occur alternatively in our lives like the waxing and waning of the moon.

The river Ganges flowing out of His head denotes that our mind should be as pure as the river Ganges. The river Ganges is not ruined by impurities, like-wise our mind should also not be ruined by worldly desires.

We all have animal instincts within ourselves. We have to purge these instincts to attain a higher level of mankind. This is symbolised by the tiger hide worn by Lord Siva.

Dhakshinamoorthy



Dhakshinamoorthy is the universal Guru (teacher). He symbolises the peaceful nature of Lord Siva. He sits facing south under the banyan tree with one leg folded and the other resting on Muyalagan (demon). He sits on a tiger hide holding the Chinmudra (bestowing knowledge) and Abaya mudra (assurance) in both the front hands. In the other two hands he carries a Rudrakshamala and a snake/fire.

The Chinmudhra of Dhakshinamoorthy



The chinmudhra of Lord Dhakshinamoorthy symbolises Gnana. Here, the thumb and index finger are joined together, thus separating themselves from the other three fingers.

1. Thumb - God
2. Index finger - Soul
3. Middle finger - Aanava
4. Ring finger - Kanma
5. Little finger - Maya

The philosophy of this mudhra is that the soul has to be rid off the three fetters to merge with the Lord.

The worship of Sandeswarar

Sandeswarar is found in all Siva temples near the komuhai of the Sanctum Sanctorum. He is worshipped before leaving the Siva temple. We should never go completely around the Sandeswarar Sannidhi, and we also should not offer anything, such as a thread. This is because He only accepts that, which has already been offered to Lord Siva.

Why we clap our hands at the Sandeswarar Sannidhi?

Sandeswarar is constantly meditating on Lord Siva. Hence, we should lightly clap our hands thrice to get His attention, and then pray to Him for the grace of Lord Siva.

64 Arts

1. Akshara Ilakanam - Alphabets
2. Likidham - Knowledge of writing
3. Kanidham - Mathematics
4. Vedham - Ancient Hindu scriptures
5. Puraanam - Hindu Legends
6. Viyakaranam - Grammar
7. Sodhida Sastram - Astronomy
8. Dharma Sastram - Book of Ethics
9. Needhi Sastram - Book of Justice
10. Yoga Sastram - Book of Yoga
11. Mantra Sastram - Book of Mantras
12. Saguna Sastram - Book of Omens
13. Sirpa Sastram - Book of Sculptures
14. Vaidhya Sastram - Book of Medicine
15. Uruva Sastram - Book of Appearances
16. Idhikasam - Epic
17. Sapta Brahmam - Book of Sound
18. Kaviyam - Epic poem
19. Alankaram - Art of make-up
20. Madhura Pashanam - Speech
21. Nadakam - Drama
22. Nirutham - Dance
23. Veenai - Veena
24. Venu - Flute
25. Miridhangam - Miridhangam (a kind of drum)
26. Thaalam - Rhythm
27. Astra Paritchai - Bow and arrow
28. Kanaga Paritchai - Knowledge of gold
29. Radha Paritchai - Riding chariots
30. Kaja Paritchai - Knowledge of elephants
31. Aswa Paritchai - Knowledge of horses
32. Ratna Paritchai - Knowlege of gems

33. Bhoomi Paritchai - Knowledge of soil
34. Sangirama Ilakanam - Leading the army
35. Malyudham - Wrestling
36. Akarshanam - Glamour
37. Uchadanam - Instigating evil spirits
38. Vithveshanam - Shock
39. Madhana Sastram - Art of love
40. Mohanam - Hypnotism
41. Vasikaranam - Art of charming
42. Rasa Vadham - Art of making gold from low quality metals
43. Kandharva Vedham - The secrets of kandharvas
44. Baipeela Vadham - Communicating with animals
45. Kavuthu Vadham - Transforming miseries into happiness
46. Thathu Vadham - Knowledge of pulse
47. Karudam - Removing poison through mantras
48. Nashta Prachanam - Knowledge of preventing losses
49. Mutti - Palmistry
50. Ahaya pravesam - Disappearing in the sky
51. Ahaya Gamanam - Roaming invisibly in the sky
52. Parakaya Pravesam - Transferring soul into another body
53. Adhirusiyam - Becoming inviible
54. Indhra Jalam - Magic
55. Mahendra Jalam - Performing wonders
56. Agni Sthambam - Walking on fire
57. Jala Sthambam - Walking on water
58. Vayu Sthambam - Walking on air
59. Dhrishti Sthambam - Controlling the eyes
60. Vaaku Sthambam - Controlling the speech
61. Sukila Sthambam - Controlling the sense organs
62. Kanna Sthambam - Finding lost things
63. Katka Sthambam - Attracting war weapons
64. Avasthai Prayogam - Controlling the Atma (soul)

Six types of religious worships

Ganapathyam	-	Worship of Ganapathy
Koumaram	-	Worship of Murugan
Souram	-	Worship of Sun
Saktham	-	Worship of Sakthi
Saivam	-	Worship of Siva
Vaishnavam	-	Worship of Vishnu

Ashta Iswaryams

Kingdom, Relatives, Children, Paddy, Gold, Stones (Ratnas), Vehicles, Slaves.

The six faces of Lord Muruga

1. Illuminating the world
2. Protecting Homams
3. Blessing the devotees by removing miseries
4. Explaining the Vedhas and Agamas
5. Destroying evil and enemies, and conferring good
6. Pleasing Valli, his consort.

What is the philosophy of carrying the Kavadi?

Idumban, disciple of Saint Agasthyar, carried two hillocks, Sivamalai and Sakthimalai, over his shoulders on a journey to the South of India. On his way, he stopped over at Palani to rest, and placed the hillocks down. Later, he found it impossible to lift them up again. This became one of the six abodes of Lord Murugan, and Idumban was blessed. The philosophy of this is that, those who carry the kavadi (symbolising the 2 hillocks) over their shoulders and walk up to the temple, shall have their vows fulfilled. The Kavadi is carried in Murugan temples during festivals.

Why we shave our heads in temples like Thirupathi and Kathirgamam?

The head is shaved symbolising the removal of our ego, arrogance and pride before the Lord. As there will be a change in our appearance, it is believed that there will be a change in our character for the better.

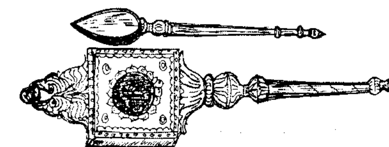
Porthengai Adithal

It is a custom to break a coconut before commencing any event. During New Year in the early days, Lord Vinayaka was worshipped by breaking a Porthengai (a smaller variety of coconut) with another. This was practiced during ancient times in temples, but is vanishing now-a-days.

Why are Theechattis carried in temples?

The Theechchatti (fire pot) is carried by women during festivals in Sakthi temples. It was performed in ancient times to signify that fire will not burn the women with chastity. This practice continues even today.

Sirukku and Siruvam



Sirukku and Siruvam are implements used to pour ghee into the homam. The Sirukku and Siruvam are considered as Sakthi and Siva respectively. Sivasakthi pooja is done for these before pouring the ghee.

Poorna Aguthi

Poorna Aguthi is the process of pouring a large quantity of ghee into the homa kundam using the Sirukku and Siruvam. This is performed standing, and with a flower placed on the Siruvam.

Yaga Ratchai

Dharpai is burnt in the Homa Agni, and then the burnt dharpai is mixed with ghee. This is known as Yaga Ratchai, which is worn as a bindhi on the forehead.

The significance of the 'Varagu'

The significant feature of the varagu (a kind of millet) is that it does not wither. It also has the strength to withstand thunder. Hence, the Gopurakalasams (pot- like structures on top of the gopuram) in temples are filled with varagu.

Sprinkling Saanam

Saanam (mixture of cow dung and water) acts as a germicide. Hence, it is sprinkled in houses.

Why we offer food to crows?

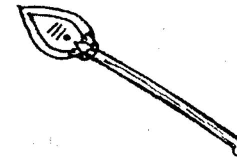
On the day of fasting, we offer food to crows first and then only eat. This is because of the belief that our ancestors visit in the form of crows.

The weapons of the Lords

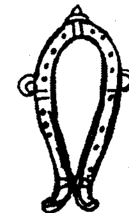
Thrisoolam ***(Trident)*** - The weapon of Lord Siva. The three prongs denote the three malas Aanava, Kanma and Maya. Hence, it symbolises the destruction of the three malas and upliftment of the soul.



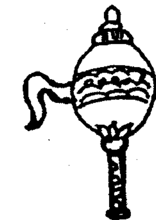
Vel ***(Spear)*** - The weapon of Lord Muruga. It is the symbol of Gnana Sakthi denoting the destruction of ignorance and being blessed with Gnana.



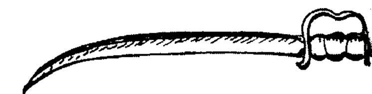
Pasam ***(Cord)*** - Destroys evil



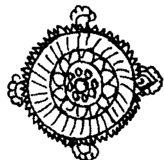
Angusam ***(Goad)*** - Guides the devotees in the right path.



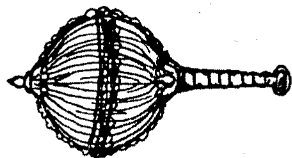
Vaal ***(Sword)*** - Destroys ego and punishes the bad.



Chakram *(Discus)* - Destroys evil and protects the devotees.



Gadai *(Mace)* - Destroys evil, controls haughtiness, and blesses devotees.



Panchayudham (Five Weapons)

This is a pendant worn on the child to protect from evil eyes, evil influences, fear and diseases. The five weapons of Lord Vishnu, Sangu (conch), Chakram (discus), Gadai (mace), Vil (bow) and Vaal (sword), are impressed on it.

Panchalogam (Five Metals)

Gold, Silver, Copper, Iron and Lead.

The consorts of the Saptarishis (seven rishis)

Kachiyappar	Adithi
Athri	Anusya
Baradwajar	Susila
Viswamitrar	Kumuthavathi
Gouthamar	Ahalya
Jamathkani	Renuka
Vasishtar	Arundhathi

What is the philosophy of the Namaskaram?

God is present within everyone. By realizing this, the Namaskaram is performed as a form of respect to others.

When performing Namaskaram, our enmity, pride, selfishness, and jealousiness will all vanish. There won't be any feelings of indifference between people on realization that everybody is equal in Gods creation.

The types of Namaskarams

Ehanga Namaskaram : Performing Namaskaram and bowing the head.

Thriyanga Namaskaram : Performing Namaskaram by raising both hands above the head.

Panchanga Namaskaram :
Prostrating with the forehead, hands, and knees touching the floor. (Performed by only women).



Ashtanga Namaskaram : Prostrating with the forehead, ears, chest, hands and legs touching the floor. (Performed by only men).



Mantras

Saints composed mantras with shorter phrases to make it easier for us to memorise them. The mantras are very powerful. They are classified as Mantram, Maha mantram and Peeja mantram. Mantram denotes the tree, where the Peeja mantras are the seeds, and the Maha mantras are the fruits and flowers that give us benefits.

Vinayaka worship

Lord Vinayaka is usually worshipped by tapping both temples of the forehead three times with the fists. This is followed by the Thopukaranam.

Thopukaranam

Thopukaranam is the way of worshipping Lord Vinayaka. The word Thopukaranam originated from the word Thorpikaranam, where 'Thorpi' denotes 'with hands' and 'karnam' means 'ears'. This is performed by moving right down (bending the knees completely) and getting up quickly three times, while pulling the right ear with the left hand and the left ear with the right hand. Women do not perform Thopukaranams.

The five functions of Lord Vinayaka:

1. Holds a Pasam (cord) denoting Creation.
2. Holds a broken tusk denoting Protection.
3. Holds an Angusam (goad) denoting Destruction.
4. Trunk denotes Concealment.
5. Carries modhakams denoting Conferment of grace.

Lord Vinayakar is worshipped in many different forms :

Bala Ganapathy	-	Form of a child
Tharuna Ganapathy	-	Youth form
Pingala Ganapathy	-	Form with 6 hands
Buvanesa Ganapathy	-	Form with 8 hands
Maha Ganapathy	-	Form with 10 hands
Veera Vigneswara	-	Form with 16 hands
Sakthi Ganapathy	-	Form embracing Devi with one hand
Nirutha Ganapathy	-	Dancing form
Heramba Ganapathy	-	Form with five heads and seated on a lion

Vigrahas

Vigrahas are the idols of gods found in temples. These idols are sculptured on stones or metals, and then mantras are chanted to invoke the particular deities.

What is Thirumanchanam?

The first abishekam performed at the temple is termed 'Thirumanchanam'.

What is Suprabatham?

Suprabatham is the song sung early in the morning to awaken the Lord. In Tamil it is known as 'Thirupalli Ezhuchi'.

Paratha Poojas

Paratha poojas are performed in temples for the welfare of the whole nation.

Atmartha Poojas

Those who obtained dheekshais perform the Atmartha poojas at home.

The place of prostration in a temple

In temples, we have to prostrate only before the kodimaram (flag pole) and not in any other places such as the Sannidhis of the temple. If the Sanctum Sanctorum is facing east or west, then we must prostrate before the kodimaram facing north. If it is facing north or south, then we prostrate facing east.

Why we prostrate only before the kodimaram?

While prostrating, our feet should not face any Sannidhis. This is only possible near the kodimaram. Hence we only prostrate before the kodimaram.

What is prasadham?

Everything offered to the Almighty becomes prasadham. These are Naivedhyams, all the things used in poojas ie. sacred ash, chanthanam, kumkum, flowers, Thulasi, fruits, and theertham.

Why prasadham is distributed in temples?

All the things we take to the temple for an archanai becomes prasadham after offering to the Lord. Whatever products offered to Him with devotion becomes a sacred prasadham. Like-wise, whatever mentality one may have, when one offers himself to God, he will receive the God's grace as prasadham. When we consume prasadham, we acquire peace and joy, and become pure.

Why Theertham is distributed in temples?

Theertham (holy water) is distributed in temples to signifiy the grace of the Lord. The Theertham is very sacred as it is the product of Abishekam. Hence, the Theertham should be received with the right hand placed over the left hand and consumed, afterwich we touch our head so that we do not spill even a drop.

Why we offer salt and pepper at Sakthi temples?

Salt and pepper are offered near the kodimaram or balipeedam at Sakthi temples, such as Mariamman temple. The salt symbolises the body and the pepper symbolises the Aanava. The philosophy of offering salt and pepper thus denotes purifying ourselves. We also offer salt into the Punniya Theerthams (Temple tanks) so that our sins will be dissolved like the salt.

Why is the bell rung during poojas?

The sound of the bell is the sound of Omkaram, hence the bell is rung to attract the Lord and to ward off evil spirits. It is also rung to dissipate other sounds that distract us from meditating on the Almighty during poojas. Hence, it is rung till the end of the poojas. Some people strike the bell before entering the temple. This is to reveal that worship of the Omkaram is the way to merge with the Lord.

Why we dash coconuts on the ground in temples?

The removal of Aanava is not easy, it is as strong as the shell of the coconut. But once broken, our Gnana becomes as sweet as the white kernel and the coconut water. Hence, coconuts are dashed in temples symbolising the shattering of the ego. Only men dash the coconut.

Why a curtain is used during poojas in temples?

A curtain is used to cover the Lord during poojas. This is to signify that ignorance conceals Gnana, and Maya conceals the God present within us. Only when the curtain is removed we see the Lord. Hence, we have to remove our fetters in order to see God.

The Ragas of devotional songs sung in Temples

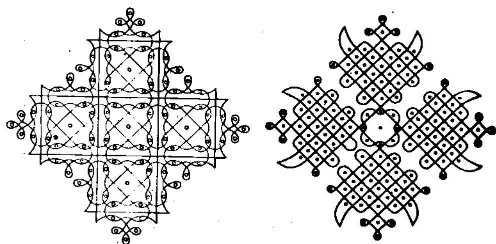
Thirupalli Ezhuchi	-	Bhoopalam
Kaalai Vazhipadu	-	Malayamarudham
Utchi Kaalam	-	Madhiyamavathy
Maalai Neram	-	Poori Kalyani
Palliarai	-	Neelambari

Why women wear Metti (*toe ring*)?

Mettis are worn to signify that the woman is married. The metti is worn on the second toe of both feet. In those days iron mettis were worn, but today silver mettis are worn. These metals are said to protect from evil effects. (In earlier days the mettis were worn by men).

Kolams

Kolams are intricate patterns found in temples, the entrances of homes, and in pooja rooms during auspicious festivals and occasions. The kolam not only serves as a purpose of decoration and protection, but also as an exercise for the women and refreshes them in the morning.



Turmeric water or cowdung mixed with water is sprinkled at the entrance to purify the place before drawing the kolam. The kolam powder is made from raw rice flour with or without adding turmeric powder. This is to provide food for the ants and birds. Turmeric is added in order to protect from infectious germs. It is also believed that the smell of turmeric prevents poisonous creatures, such as snakes and scorpions, from entering the homes. There is also a belief in villages that the kolam protects from evil spirits.

There are many types of kolams ie. rangoli (coloured kolams), kolam with flowers etc.

During auspicious occasions, kolams are drawn with an even number of lines, whereas for ordinary events they are drawn with an odd number of lines. As there were no calendars in those days, the weekdays were identified by the kolams. As the shadow of the Sun indicates the time, the pattern of the kolam indicates the day of the week.

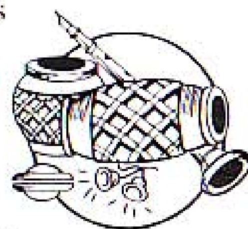
The philosophy of the Kolam

Kolams can be drawn only by bending the body. This implies that only by removing our Aanava and bowing down, we can merge with the God. The kolam is drawn as a pattern of continuous lines with no breaks. The significance of this is that there are no gaps for any evil spirits to enter.

The central point of the kolam symbolises Lord Siva and the lines surrounding it symbolises Sakthi. The kolam is drawn with rice flour and kavi (brick red soil) symbolising the welcoming of Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Vishnu respectively.

The Musical instruments played in temples and their benefits :

Musical instruments are played in temples during poojas, festivals and special functions.



Thala Osai	-	Relieves worries
Kara Thaalam	-	No fear
Sallari (cymbals)	-	Wishes fulfilled
Mattalam	-	Comfort
Perikai Adithal	-	Healthy life
Veena / Violin	-	Great benefits
Sangu (conch)	-	Destroys enemies
Nadhaswaram / Flute	-	Develops knowledge
Mridhangam / Melam	-	Victory

Aarathi

Aarathis are performed to remove evil eyes. The basic aarathi is where a peeled banana is cut into three and placed on a tray. A wick (or a matchstick wrapped with cotton wool) dipped in ghee is inserted through the centre of each banana piece and then lit. Turmeric and chunnambu (slaked lime) or sodium bicarbonate are mixed with water on the side of the tray. This mixture will turn red in colour. When performing aarathi, the person should be made to face north or east. The aarathi should be rotated three times in a clockwise direction by two sumangalis. Finally, they put out the light and apply the red paste on the forehead of the person.

Dispelling the effects of Evil eyes

3 dry chillies, ½ tsp mustard seeds, salt, a little sand from the entrance, and either a few neem leaves or ½ tsp pepper.

At dusk, after worshipping God and applying sacred ash, the performer takes the above ingredients and holds them in her right hand. The person who needs the remedy stands before the performer.

The performer then rotates her right hand three times in a clockwise direction, and then strokes the whole body of the person with that hand. After this the person spits three times into the ingredients, and then the performer throws them into the fire.

The philosophy of the Sadari (crown)



The Thiruvadi is Lord Vishnu's feet, and is found on top of the Sadari. When the temple priest places the Sadari on our heads, it denotes that we surrender ourselves at the lotus feet of Lord Vishnu, and hence all our sins will vanish.

Why we burn sesame seeds tied in a black cloth for Lord Saneeswara?

Sesame seeds are tied in a black cloth, dipped in gingelly oil, placed in a clay pot and burnt before the Lord Saneeswara Sannidhi in the temple. Here, the black cloth denotes our sins, and gingelly oil denotes the Lord's grace. Hence, it is performed to signify the burning of our sins by the anger flame of Lord Saneeswara.

Why we make Vinayakar idols from turmeric powder?

Turmeric is a very auspicious product. Hence, the turmeric powder is mixed with a little water and made into a round shape symbolizing Lord Vinayakar. A few arugampul are inserted through the top. The round shape denotes the 'Pillaiyar Suzhi', the form of sound, and the arugampul denotes the scriptures. The idols can also be made from cow dung, chanthanam and soil.

The 16 Acquisitions

1. Fame
2. Education
3. Power
4. Success
5. Good children
6. Gold
7. Abundance of grains
8. Favourable destiny
9. Pleasure
10. Wisdom
11. Beauty
12. Magnanimity
13. Youthfulness
14. Courage
15. Good health
16. Longevity



Religious Hymns

Thevaaram

Thodudaya seviyan vidai yeyrior thooven mathi soodi
Kaadudaya sudalaip podi poosiyen ullang kavar kal van
Edhudaya malaranunai nadpaninth thettha arul seitha
Peedudaya peramaapura meviya pemaan nevan andray

- Thirugnanasambanthar

Kuniththa puruvamum kovaicchevaayit kumin chirippum
Panithatha sadaiyum pavalampohl mheniyum paal venneerum
Iniththamudaiya eduththa potpaathamum kaanna petral
Maniththa piraviyum vhenduvathae intha manilathay

- Thirunanaavukkarasar

Sotrunai vhethiyan sothi vaanavan
Potrunai thirunthadi porunthak kaitholak
Katrunai pootiyohr kadalil paaichinum
Natrunai yaavathu namachivaayavay

- Thirunanaavukkarasar

Kootraayinavaaru vilakkahaleer
Kodumaipala seithana naan arriyaen
Ehtraai adikae iravum pahalum
Piriyaadhu vananguvan eppozhuthum
Thoatrraa thenvayitrrin agham padiyae
Kudaroddu thudakki mudakkiyida
Aatraen adiyaen adhighaik kedila
Veerattaanath thurai ammaanae

- Thirunaavukkarasar

Manthira Maavathu Neeru Vaanavar Mhelathu Neeru
Sunthara Maavathu Neeru Thuthikkap Paduvathu Neeru
Thanthira Maavathu Neeru Samayathil Ullathu Neeru
Senthuvar Vaayumai Pangan Thiru Vaalavaayaan Thiruneereh

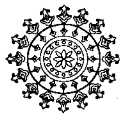
- Thirugnanasambanthar

Ponnar Mhenianeh Pulitholai Ara-ikisaithu
Minnar Sensadai Male milir konrai aninthavaneh
Manneh mamaniyeh mala padiyul manickameh
Anneh unnai yallalini yarai ninaikeneh

- Suntharar

Piththa Pirai Soodi Perumaneh Arulala
Eththaa Maravaathe Ninaikinren Manathunnai
Vaithai Pennai Thenpal Vennai Nallur Arutthuriul
Athavunak Kalaayini Allene Enalameh

- Suntharar



Thirupugazh

Ehrumayil ehrivilai yaadu mugam ondray
Eesarudan gnana mozhi pesumugam ondray
Khoorum adiyaargal vinai theerkkum mugam ondray
Kundru - ruva velvaangi nindra mugam ondray
Maaru padu soorarai vathaitha mugam ondray
Vailliyai manam punara vantha mugam ondray
Aarumuga mana porul nee arulal vheindum
Aathi yarunaasalam amarntha perumaalay

- Arunakirinathar

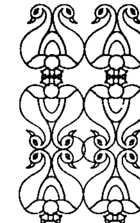
Thiru Angamalai

Thalaiye nee vannangaay - Thalai
Maalai thalaikku annindhu
Thalaiyaale bali therum thalaivanaith
Thalaiye nee vanangaay.

Thirupuraanam

Vaanmuhil valaathu peiher malivalanchurakka mannan
Kohnmurai arasuseiher, kurai vilathu uyirhal vazha
Nanmarai arangal ohnga, nattavam vellvi malha
Meinmaikhol saiva neethi, vilanguha ulahamellam

- Kasiyappa Sivachariar



Aum
Sivamayam



Thiruchittampalam

Thiruvasagam

Thollai irum piravi soolum thalai neeki
Allal aruthu aanantham aakiathey - ellai
Maruva neri yalikum Vathavoor enkone
Thiruvasagam ennum thane.

Sivapuranam

Namachivaya vazhga Nathan Thaal vazhga
Immai poluthum en nenjil Neengathaan thaal vazhga
Kokazhi aanda kurumani than thaal vazhga
Aakamum aahinindru annipaan thaal vazhga
Ekan anekan Iraivan adi vazhga

Vekam keduth thaanda Venthan adi velga
Pirapparukum pingnakandran Peykalalgal velga
Purath tharku cheyon then Poonkalalgal velga
Karanguvivar ul magilum kon kalalgal velga
Siran guvivar ongu vikkum seeron kalal velga

Eesan adi potri Enthai adi potri
Thesan adi potri Sivan se vadi potri
Neyathe nindra Nimalan adi potri
Maya pirapparukum Mannan adi Potri
Seerar perunthurai nam Thevan adi Portti

Aaratha inbam Arulum malai potri
Sivan avan en sinthaiyul nindra athanaal
Avan arulaale avan thaal vanangi
Sinthai Mahila Sivapuranam thannai
Munthai vinai muluthum oya uraippaniyan

Kannuthalaan than karunai kann kaatta vantheythi
Ennuthatketta elizhaar kazhal irranji
Vinnirainthu mannirainthu mikai vilangoliyaai
Enniranthellai ilathaaney nin perunjeer
Polla vinaiyan Pugalumaaronrraiyan

Pullaahi Poodaai puluvaai maramaahi
Pal viruvam aahi paravayaai pampaahi
Kallaai manitharaai peyaai kanangalaai
Val asurar aahi munivaraai thevaraai
Sellaa nindra ith thaavara sangamathul

Ellap pirappum piranth ilaithan emperumaan
Meiyai un ponnadigal kandu indru veedutren
Uyya en ullaththul Omkaaramaai nindra
Meiya vimala vidai paagaa vedhangal
Aya' ena ongi azhnthu akandra nunniyane

Veyaai thaniyaai Iyamaana naam vimala
Poyaayina ellaam Poyagala vantharuli
Megnanam aahi Milirkindra meichudaray
Engnanam illathen inpap perumaaney
Angnanam thannai akalvikum nallarivey

Aakam alaviruthi illaai anaithulakum
Aakuvai Kaapai alippaai arul tharuvaai
Pokkuvaai ennai pukuvippaai nintholumpin
Naattraththin neriyaai seyaai naniyane
Maatram manam kazhiya nindra marayoney

Karantha paal kannalodu nei Kalanthaal pola
Siranthadiyar sinthanayul thenoori nindru
Pirantha pirapparukum engal perumaan
Nirangalor ayinthudayaai vinnorgal etha
Marainthirunthaai emperumaan valvinaiyen thannai

Marainthida moodiya maya irulai
Aram paavam ennum arungkaitraal kattip
Puranthol porthu engum pulu azhuku moodi
Malam sorum onpathu vayit kudilai
Malankap pulan ayinthum vanjanaiyai seyya

Vilangu manaththaal vimala unakku
Kalantha anbaahik kasinthu ullurugum
Nalanthaan ilatha siriyetku nalki
Nilanthan meil vantharuli neer kazhalkal kaatti
Naayit kadayaaik kidantha adiyetkuth

Thaayit sirantha thayavaana thaththuvanay
Maasatra sothy Malarntha malar chudaray
Theisanay thenaar amuthay siva puranay
Pasamaam pattraruthup paarikum aariyanay
Nesa Arul purinthu nenjil vanjam kedap

Peraathu nindra perun karunaip peraaray
Aara amuthay alavilaap pemmaanay
Oradhaar ullaththu olikkum oliyaanay
Neeraai urukki en aaruyiraai nindranay
Inbamum thunbamum illaanay ullaanay

Anbarukku anbanay yaaveyumaam allayumaam
Sothiyanay thun irulay thondraap perumayanay
Aathiyanay andham Naduvaaki allaanay
Eerthennai artkonda endhai perumaanay
Koortha mengnanathaal kondunarvaar thangkaruthin

Nokariya nokay nunukariya nunnunarvay
Pokkum varavum punarvum ilaap punniyanay
Kaakkum em kaavalanay kaanpariya peroliyay
Aatru inba vellamay Aththamikkaai nindra
Thottrach chudar oliyaai sollaatha nunnunarvaai

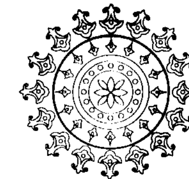
Maatramaam vayyakaththin vevverai vantharivaam
Thetranay thetra thelivay en sinthanaiyul
Oottraana unnaar amuthay udaiyaanay
Vetru vigaara vidakudambin udkidappa
Aatren em ayyaa aranai oh endrendru

Potrip pugazhnthirunthu Poikettu meyyaanaar
Meettingu vanthu vinaip piravi saaraamay
Kallap pulakurambai kattazhika vallaanay
Nallirulil nattam payindraadum naathanay
Thillaiyil koothanay Then paandi naattaanay

Allal piravi aruppaanay oh endru
Sollatku ariyaanai solli thiruvadikeezh
Solliya paattin porul unarnthu solluvaar
Selvar sivapuraththin ullaar Sivanadikeezh
Pallorum Ethap paninthu

Thiruchittampalam

- Manickavasagar Swami



Aum



Kandhar Sashti Kavasam

Nerisai Venpaa

Thuthipporkku Valvinaipoom Thunbampoom Nenjil
Pathippoorkkuch Selvam Paliththuk - Kathith Ongum
Nishtaiyung Kaikoodum Nimalar Arul Kandhar
Sashti Kavasanth thanai.

Kural Venpaa

Amarar idar dheera amaram purintha
Kumaran adi nenche kuri

Nool

Sashtiyai nokkach Saravana Bhavanar
Sishtaruk kuthavum senkathir Velon
Padham irandil panmanich sadhangai
Geetham padak kin kini yada
Myya nadanjseyum Mylvagananar
Kaiyilve lalenaik kakkavenru vanthu
Varavara Velaudhanar varuga
Varuga Varuga mylon Varuga

Indhjran mudhala endisai porta
Mandhira Vadivel varuga varuga
Vasavan Maruga Varuga varuga
Nesak Kuramagal ninaivon varuga
Arumugam padaithdha Iyah varuga
Neeridum Velavan nithdham varuga
Siragiri Velavan seekkiram varuga
Saravana Bhavanar Sadudhiyil Varuga
Ravana bhavasa ta ta ta ta ta ta ta
Tivana bhavasa ti ti ti ti ti ti ti
Vinabhava saravana veera Namoh Namoh
Nibhava Saravana niranira nirena
Vasara Vanabha Varuga Varuga
Asurar kudikeduthdha Iyah varuga
Ennai alum Ilaiyon kaiyil
Pannirandayudham pasa angusamum
Parandha vizhigal panniran dilanga
Viraindhenaik kakkah Velon varuga
Iyumkiliyum adaivudan chowvum
Uyyoli chowvum uyiraiyung kiliyum
Kiliyunj chowvum kilaroli yaiyum
Nilaipet renmun nithdhamum olirum
Shanmugan neeyum thaniyoli yowvum
Kundali yam shiva kugan dhinam Varuga
Arumugamum animudi arum
Neeridu netriyum neenda puruvamum
Panniru kannum pavalach chev vayum
Nanneri netriyil navamanich chuddiyum
Eraru seviyil ilagu kundalamum
Ariru thinpuyath thazhagiya marbil

Palpoo shanamum padhakkamum dharithdhu
Nanmani poonda navaratna malaiyum
Muppuri noolum muthdhani marbum
Cheppazha gudaiya Thiruvayiru undhiyum
Dhuvanda marungil sudarolip pattum
Navaratnam pathithdha natsee ravum
Iruthodai azhagum inai muzhandhalum
Thiruvadi yadhanil silamboli muzhanga
Segagana segaganasegagana segana
Mogamoga mogamoga mogamoga mogana
Naga naga naga naga naga naga nagena
Digu guna digudigu diguguna diguna
Tatatata tatatata tatatata tatata
Titititi titititi tititi
Dudududu dudududu dudududu dududu
dagu dagu digudigu dangu dingugu
Vindha vindhu mylon vindhu
Mundhu mundhu murugavel mundhu
Endhanai yalum eragach Selve
Myndhan vendum varamahjzhn dhuthavum
Lala Lala Lala vesamum
Leela Leela Leela vinodhanenru
Unthiru vadiyai urudhiyen rennum
Endhalai vaithdhun inaiyadi kakkah
Ennuyirk Kuyiram Iraivan kakkah
Panniru vizhiyal Balanaik kakkah
Adiyen vadhanam azhaguvel kakkah
Podipunai netriyaip punidhavel kakkah
Kathirvel irandu kanninaik kakkah
Vidhi sevi yirandum Velavar kakkah

Nasigal irandum Nalvel kakkah
Pesiya vaidhanaip peruvel kakkah
Muppath dhirupal munaivel kakkah
Seppiya navaich Sevvel kakkah
Kanna mirandum Kathirvel kakkah
Fnnilung kazhuthdhai iniyavel kakkah
marbai Ratna Vadivel kakkah
Serila mulaimar Thiruvel kakkah
Vadivel ruthol valamperak kakkah
Pidarigalirandum peruvel kakkah
Azhāgudan mudhugai Arulbel kakkah
Pazhupathi narum paruvel kakkah
Vetrivel vayitrai vilangave kakkah
Sitridai azhagurash Sevvl kakkah
Nanan kayitrai Nalvel kakkah
Ann kuri yirandum Ayilvel kakkh
Pittamirandum Peruvel kakkah
Vattak kudhathdhai Valvel kakkah
Panaith thodai yirandum paruvel kakkah
Kanaikkal muzhandhal kathirvel kakkah
Iviral adiyinai Arulvel kakkah
Kaika lirandum Karunaivel kakkah
Munkai yirandum murannvel kakkah
Pinkai yirandum pinnaval irukkah
Navil saraswathy natrunaiyaga
Nabik Kamalam Nalvel kakkah
Muppal nadiyai Munaivel kakkah
Eppozhudhum enai Ethirvel kakkah
Adiyen vasanam asaivula neram
Kadugave vandhu Kanagavel kakkah

Varumpagal dhannil vachchiravel kakkah
Araiyirul dhannil Anaiyavel kakkah
Emathdhil samathdhjl Ethirvel kakkah
Thamadham neekkich sadhurvel kakkah
Kakkah kakkah kanaga vel kakkah
Nokkah nokkah nodiyil nokkah
Thakkath thakkah thadaiyarath thakkah
Parkkap pakkap pavam podipada
Pilli sooniyam perumpagai agala
Valla poodham valaddigap peygal
Allat paduthdhum adanga muniyum
Pillaigal thinnum puzhakkadai muniyum
Kollivaip peygalum kuralaip peygalum
Pengalaith thodarum brahmarak katharum
Adiyanaik kandal alarik kalangida
Irisi kadderi ith thunba senaiyum
Ellilum iruddilum ethirppadum annarum
kanapoosai kollum kaliyo danai varum
Vittangkararum migupala peygalum
Thandiyak kararum chandalakalum
En peyar sollavum idivizhunthodida
Anai adiyinil arumpavai kalum
Poonai mayinil arumpavai kalum
Nagamum maayirum neenmudi mandaiyum
Pavaikaludane palakala saththudan
Manaiyit puthaithdha vanjanai thanaiyum
Ottiya pavaiyum ottiyach cherukkum
Kasum panamum kavudan chorum
Odhumanj anamum oruvazhip pokkum
Adiyanaik kandal alaindhu kulaindhida

Matrar vanjagar vandhu vanangida
Kaladhoo dhalenaik kandat kalangida
Anji nadungida randu purandida
Vaivittalari mathiked doda
Padiyinil muddap pasak kayitral
Kaddudan angam katharidak kaddu
Kaddi uruddu kaikai muriyak
Kaddu kaddu katharidak kaddu
Muddu muddu vizhigal pithungida
Chekku chekku sedhil sedhilaga
Chokku chokku soorpagaich chokku
Kuttu kuttu koor vadivelal
Patru patru pagalavan dhanaleri
Dhanaleri dhanaleri dhanaladhu vaga
Viduvidu velai verundathu vodap
Puliyum nariyum punnari nayum
Eliyum karadiyum inith thodarnth thodath
Thelum pambum seiyan pooran
Kadivida vishangal kadith thuyarangam
Eriya vishangal elidhinil iranga
Olippunj chulukkum orudhalai noyum
Vadhanj sayithdhiyam valippup pithdham
Choolasayang kunmam chokkuch chirangu
Kudaichchal silandhi kudalvip piridhi
Pakkap pilavai padarthodai vazhai
Paduvan paduduvan kaithdhal silandhi
Patkuthdhu aranai paru arai yappum
Ellap pini yum enranaik kandal
Nilla thoda nee enak karulvai
Eerezh ulagamum enakkura vaga

Anum pennum anaivarum enakkah
Mannalara sarum mahizhndhura vagavum
Unnaith thuthikka unthiru naman
Saravana Bhavane Sailoli Bhavane
Thiripura Bhavane Thigazholi Bhavane
Paripura Bhavane Bhavamoli Bhavane
Arithiru maruga Amara pathiyaik
Kaththuth Devargal kadunj sirai viduthdhai
Kandha Kugane kathir Velavane
Kathirgai mayindha kadamba kadambanai
Idumbanai azhithadha iniyavel Muruga
Thanigasalane sankaran puthalva
Kathirga maththurai Kathirvel Muruga
Pazhanip pathyvazh Bala Kumara
Avinan Kudivazyazhagiya vela
Senthinma malaiyurum Sengalva raya
Samar purivazh Shanmugath tharase
Karar kuzhalal Kalaimagal nanrai
En - naa irukka yanunaip pada
Enaith thodarnth thirukkum endhi Muruganaip
Padinen adinen paravasamaga
Adinen nadinen avinan poothiyai
Nesamudan yan netriyil aniyap
Pasa vinaigal patradhu neengi
Un padham perave unarulaga
Anbudan iradchi annamumnj sonnamum
Methdha methdhaga veladhanar
Sithdhi petradiyen sirappudan vaazhga
Vaazhga vaazhaga mylon vaazhga
Vaazhga vaazhaga vadivel vaazhga

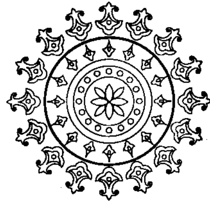
Vaazhga vaazhaga Malaikkuru Vaazhga
Vaazhga vaazhaga Malaikkura magaludan
Vaazhga vaazhaga varanath thuvasam
Vaazhga vaazhaga en varumaigal neenga
Ethdhanai kuraigal ethdhanai pizhaigal
Ethdhanai adiyen ethdhanai seyinum
Petravan nee Guru poruppa dhun kadan
Petraval Kuramagal petrava lame
Pillaiyen ranbaip priya malithdhu
Mayindhanen meedhun manamahizhnth arulith
Thanjamen radiyar thazhaiththida Arul sei
Kandhar Sashti Kavasam virumbi
Balan Dhevaraayan pagarnthathaik
Kalaiyil malaiyil karuth thudan naalum
Asaa rathdhudan angam thulakki
Nesa mudanoru ninaivadhu vaagik
Kandhar Shasti Kavasa midhanaich
Chindhai kalangadhu dhiyanippavargal
Orunal muppat tarutuk kondu
Odhiye sebithdhu ugandhu neeraniya
Ashtathik kullor adangalum vasamaith
Thisai manna renmar sernthdhan garuluvar
Matrala rellam vandhu vananguvar
Navakol mahizhndhu nanmai yalithdhidum
Navamadha nenavum nallezhil peruvar
Endha naalumee rettai vaazhvar
Kandharkai velam kavasath thadiyai
Vazhiyaaik kana meiyai vilangum
Vizhiyaat kana verundidum peygal
Polladhavaraip podippodi yakkum

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Vaazhga vaazhaga mylon vaazhga
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Vaazhga vaazhaga Malaikkuru Vaazhga
Vaazhga vaazhaga Malaikkura magaludan
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Endha naalumee rettai vaazhvar
Kandharkai velam kavasath thadiyai
Vazhiyaaik kana meiyai vilangum
Vizhiyaat kana verundidum peygal
Polladhavaraip podippodi yakkum

Nallor ninavil nadanam puriyum
Sarva sathdhuru sanka rathdhadi
Arindhuru dhullam Ashtaluxmy galil
Veeraluxmykku virundhuna vakach
Soorapath maavaith thuniththakai yadhanal
Irupath thezhvarkku uvanthamu thalithdha
Guruparan pazhanik kunrini lirukkum
Sinnak kuzhandhai sevadi porti
Enaith thaduth thadkola enrena thullam
Meviya vadivurum velava porti
Dhevargal Sena Pathiye porti
Kuramagal manamahizh Kove porti
Thiramigu divya Dhega porti
Idumda yudhane Idumba porti
Kadamba porti kandha porti
Vedchi punaiyum vele porti
Uyar Giri Kanaga sabaikko rarase
Mayillnada miduvoi malarady saranam
Saranam saranam saranam Bhava Om
Saranam Saranam Shanmuga saranam

❋ ❋ ❋



Bhajans

Vinayaka

Shuklam Baratharam Ganapathi Manthram
Nityam Nityam Japo Japo
Vighna Vinayaka Vidya Dhayaka
Veera Ganpathi Bhajo Bhajo

Guru

Maanasa Bhajare Guru Charanam
Dhustara Bhava Sagara Dharanam
Guru Maharaj Guru Jai Jai
Sai Natha Sathguru Jai Jai
Om Nama Shivaya Om Nama Shivaya Om Nama
Shivaya Shivaya Nama Om
Arunachal Shiva Arunachala Shiva Arunachala Shiva
Aruna Shiva Om
Omkaram Baba Omkaram Baba Omkaram Baba Om
Namo Baba

Shiva

Dam Dam Dam Dam Damaru Bhajey
Hara Bhola Natha Shiva Shambho Bhajey
Ghana Ghana Ghana Ghana Ghanta Bhajey
Hara Gowri Natha Shiva Shambho Bhajey
Hara Sai Natha Shiva Shambho Bhajey

Shakthi

Janani Janani Sathya Sai Subha Janani
Jagath Karini Pari Poorani Sayeeshwari Janani
Sathya Swaroopini Janani Dharma Samvarthini Janani
Shantha Swaroopini Janani Sai Prema Pradhayini Janani

Muruga

Subramanyam Subramanyam
Shanmuganatha Subramanyam
Siva Siva Siva Siva Subramanyam
Hara Hara Hara Hara Subramanyam
Siva Siva Hara Hara Subramanyam
Hara Hara Siva Siva Subramanyam
Siva Sharavanabhava Subramanyam
Guru Sharavanabhava Subramanyam
Siva Siva Hara Hara Subramanyam
Hara Hara Siva Siva Subramanyam

Rama

Prema Mudhitha Manasa Kaho Rama Rama Ram
Rama Rama Ram Rama Rama Ram Sri Rama Rama Ram

Papa Ghate Dhukkha Mite Leke Rama Nam
Bhava Samudra Sukhadanava Ek Rama Nam (Rama)

Paramashanthi Sukha Nidhana Dhivya Rama Nam
Niradhara ko Adhara Ek Rama Nam (Rama)
Parama Gopya Parama Divya Manthra Rama Nam
Santha Hrudaya Sothavastha Ek Rama Nam (Rama)

Matha Pitha Bandhu Saka Sabhi Rama Nam
Bhaktha Janara Jeevanathana Ek Rama Nam (Rama)

Narayana

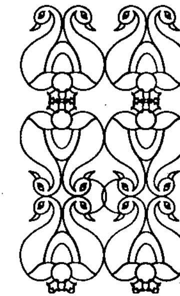
Garuda Vahana Narayana
Hey Shesha Shayana Narayana
Shri Lakshmi Ramana Narayana
Hari Om Hari Om Narayana

Krishna

Govindha Krishna Vittale Venu
Gopala Krishna Vittale
Paanduranga Vittale Jaya
Pandarinatha Vittale
Govindha Vittale Gopala Vittale
Paanduranga Vittale Pandarinatha Vittale
Vittale Vittale Paanduranga (4)

Mangalam

Jay Jaya Mangala Sai Namo
Jay Partheeswara Sai Namo
Siva Saktheeswara Sai Namo
Sri Saileswara Sai Namo



Sri Ganesha Pancharathnam

Mutha Karaatha - mothakam satha vimukthi saathagam
Kalaatharaa Vathamsagam Vilaasiloga rakshagam
Anaayakaiga Nayagam Vinasitheva - Thaithyagam
Nathaasupaasu Nasagam Namaami Tham Vinayagam

Samastha Loga Shangaram Nirastha Thaithya Kunjaram
Thareytharotharam Varam Varaypuakthara Maksharam
Krupagaram Kshamaagaram Muthagaram Yagasasram
Manaskaram Namaskruthaam Namaskaromi Baasuaram

AMBAL BHAJAN

Suththa Sakthi Suththa Sakthi Suththa Sakthi Om Sivam
Suththa Sakthi Suththa Sakthi Suththa Sakthi Om Sivam

1) Sathyagnana Dharma Sakthi Shantha Sakthi Om Sivam
Satchithaanantha Aathma Sakthi Sarva Sakthi Om Sivam

2) Vethasasthra Sakalakala Vidhya Sakthi Om Sivam
Veera Dheera Dhairya Sakthi Vijaya Sakthi Om Sivam

3) Naatha Geetha Gaanakala Nadana Sakthi Om Sivam
Mahamanthra Yanthra Thanthra Vasiyasakthi Om Sivam

4) Yoga Boga Thiyaga Sakthi Logasakthi Om Sivam
Thaaga Moha Soharahitha Thabo Sakthi Om Sivam

5) Thushta Sathru Naasa Sakthi Durga Sakthi Om Sivam
Ashtaluxmi Gnanavaani Amara Sakthi Om Sivam

6) Kunchitha Patha Abayahastha Vaanjithapala Thayagam
Gurupara Siva Hara Hara Nadarajah Sutha Sakthi Om.



Chapter 5

Our Association

The Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association was founded in 1965, with the blessings of holy men, for the development of social, religious, art and cultural activities.

Since then, we have been observing religious festivals every year. Most of the Hindu women in Colombo have joined us in social service activities to bring honour to our Association. From the very beginning, we all had a strong desire to run a home for the elderly women, and due to the selfless service of our members, such a project was started in 1997 with the blessings of 'Matha Parasakthi'. To fulfill this desire, our Patron, the late Mrs. Visalambal Ariyakutti, gave us a piece of land with a house at a concessional rate, and we in turn named it 'Visalambal Anbu Illam' in her memory.

Our members, knowing that the Almighty has given us this life to lead it honestly, and to help others for their well-being, are running this Illam with the co-operation of everyone with utmost devotion. I

would like to share the feelings expressed by those who have visited this 'Anbu Illam'.

'Anbu Illam' has a spacious courtyard, with beautiful flowers and trees, and a peaceful atmosphere. Every morning, devotional songs are played from 7 am onwards. The 'Anbu Illam' provides peace and happiness to the elderly, which they require. To look after the residents, we have employed Supervisors, Cooks, and other necessary staff who work with the 'service' motto. Doctors voluntarily visit our Illam twice a month and conduct health checkups. Under the supervision of our Executive members, this home is run well.

We also have a small library, and though it is small, it has several religious books and books on devotional songs. The residents pass their time by reading books, watching TV, listening to the radio, talking to the visitors, and participating in our annual festival celebrations.

Our Institution is providing service, without expecting any rewards, to those who are unable to look after their parents due to migration problems or other reasons. We look after them with motherly love and care. Food is provided according to their health requirements, and daily all the residents assemble at 6 in the evening to sing Bhajans.

The President of our Association, Mrs. Yamuna Ganeshalingam, always insists that we look after the elderly like our own parents. Thus the 'Anbu Illam', under her guidance, should continue its activities. We seek the blessings of 'Matha Parasakthi', and the assistance of everyone to help run our Home successfully. We believe that all your good wishes will support and strengthen us.

Rajeswary Ravikularajan

'Anbu Illam' Administrator.

2003/2004 Members



Seated Left to Right

1) Mrs.Shanthi Balasubramaniam (Vice President)
2) Mrs. Neela Dhayaparan (Asst. Secretary)
3) Mrs. Sriranjani Vishnukanthan (Treasurer)
4) Mrs. Kumuthini Mahathevan (Asst. Secretary)
5) Mrs. Indra Mahadeva (Vice President)
6) Mrs. Subathra Ganesan (Secretary)
7) Mrs. Yamuna Ganeshalingam (President)
8) Mrs. Vanaja Thavayogarajah (Vice President)
9) Mrs. Abirami Kailasapillai (Patron)
10) Mrs. Ranganayaki Pathmanathan (Patron)
11) Mrs. Navaratnam Kanagasabai (Patron)
12) Mrs. Mallika Thiyagarajah (Asst. Treasurer)

Standing Left to Right

1) Mrs. Nirmala Ragunathan
2) Mrs. Ponmalar Kandasamy
3) Mrs. Mahaluxmi Geevaratnam
4) Mrs. Kamini Yogeswaran
5) Mrs. Kaushalya Murugadas
6) Mrs. Gunarani Naguleswaran
7) Mrs. Kalawathy Mylvaganam
8) Mrs. Rajeswari Ravikularajan
9) Mrs. Shanthi Mahendran
10) Mrs. Yogeswary Logenthiran
11) Mrs. Vijyaluxmi Ketheeswaran
12) Mrs. Manovathana Canagasooryam
13) Mrs. Kamini Asokan
14) Mrs. Eshwary Balasubramaniam
15) Mrs. Jegatheeswary Sivananthan
16) Mrs. Pathma Gunaratnam
17) Mrs. Padmini Vadivetkarasan
18) Mrs. Vasanthagowri Vimalendran
19) Mrs. Pathma Somakanthan

Absentees:

1) Mrs. Indirani Yogarajah (Past President)
2) Mrs. Kamala Kanagasabai (Patron)
3) Mrs. Vamini Sathyamoorthy
4) Mrs. Shermila Rajaratnam

Pioneer Members of Our Association



Seated L to R: Not known, Mrs.Mahenthiran, Miss.Satsorubavathy Nathan, Mrs.Nadarajah, Mrs.L.Subramaniam (President) Mrs.R.Jermiah, Mrs.T. Kanagaratnam, Mrs.Satkunananthan, Mrs.Kanapathipillai
Standing L to R Mrs.S Balasingham, Miss.Sivasubramaniam, Mrs.R. Pathmanathan, Mrs.Ratnasabapathy, Mrs. Kumarasooriyar, Mrs.S. Amirthalingam, Mrs.Muthalyar, Mrs.Thangarajah, Mrs.Rajasekaram, Mrs.Suntharamoorthy, Mrs.S. Appar

GRATEFUL THANKS

"Ennandri Kondraarkum Uyvundaam Uyvillai
Seinandri Kondra magharkku"
(Kural - 110)

- Dr. N. S. Saravanan
- Arulmozhi Selvi Mrs. Vasantha Vaidhyanathan
- Mr. S. Navaneethakumar
- Mrs. Sandhana Nallalingam
- Mr. T. Shamugalingam
- Pandithai Mrs. Maragathavalli Sivalingam
- Mrs. Yamuna Ganeshalingam
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Colombo Young Women's
Hindu Association.



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OUR THANKS

"Cheiyaamal Cheidha Udhāvikku Vaiyakamum
Vaanakamum Aatral Aridhu"

Kural - (101)

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Subathra Ganesan,
Secretary
Colombo Young Women's Hindu Association.

Glossary

Aanava	-	Arrogance, pride
Aanavamalam	-	One of three fetters covering the soul until liberation
Abhishekam	-	Holy bathing of idols in temples
Agamas	-	Religious scriptures
Agnana	-	Ignorance
Agni	-	Fire
Agni Devan	-	God of Fire
Ahankara	-	Pride, ego
Aikyam	-	Union
Akshadhai	-	Rice mixed with turmeric powder used for blessings
Andhiyeshti	-	Last rites
Aradhanai	-	Divine service, worship
Aram	-	Ethical code of conduct
Archanai	-	Pooja done in temples on the name and birth star ofthe devotee
Artha	-	Wealth and power
Arugampul	-	A kind of grass (Cynodon dactylon)
Arul	-	Grace
Aruvam	-	Formless
Asura	-	Demon
Atma	-	Soul
Avatar	-	Incarnation
Balipeedam (Badralingam)	-	An inverted lotus shaped stone on top of a pedestal, situated near the kodimaram in the temple
Bhajan	-	Group singing by devotees
Bhaktha	-	Devotee
Bhakthi	-	Devotion
Bhuthi	-	Intellect
Bindhi	-	Mark worn on forehead
Brahma	-	The Creator, the first god of the Hindu Trinity
Brahman	-	Absolute reality

Camphor	-	Aromatic white crystal from the wood of camphor tree
Chakkarai / Jaggery	-	Made of sugar cane
Chanthanam	-	Sandalwood paste
Dhaanam	-	Generosity, charity
Dharisanam	-	View, insight
Dharma	-	Righteousness
Dharpai / Kusa grass	-	Sacrificial grass used in Hindu worship
Dheekshai	-	The blessings of a Guru in order to lead a Saivite life
Dheepam		lamp burning with oil, ghee
Dheeparadhanai	-	Aarathi / waving of an oil lamp or camphor
Dhoopam	-	incense / smoke of incense offered during the time of worship
Dhosham		Evil influence, fault, defect, blemish, blight, sin, offence
Dhoti	-	A trational Hindu apparel for men tied around the waist
Dhyana	-	Meditation
Gnana	-	Wisdom,sacred knowledge
Gnana Sakthi	-	Power of knowledge
Gopurum	-	Ornamental tower built over a Hindu temple
Guna	-	Quality or attribute
Guru	-	Religious teacher and spiritual guide
Homa Kundam	-	A pit for making holy fire
Ichcha Sakthi	-	Desire, will
Ishta Devathai	-	Chosen deity
Idhikasam	-	Ancient epic
Jebam	-	Repetition of holy name
Jeevaathma	-	Soul - The individual soul, self with limitations
Jeevan Mukthi	-	Salvation attained while in body
Jyothi	-	Light
Kaalam	-	Time
Kaama	-	Lawful of moral desires for wealth, Success, position of family, sense of pleasure

Kaappu tying	-	Sacred thread tied with recitation of mantras around the wrist as protection till the ceremony is over
Kaavadi	-	A penance offered to Lord Murugan
Kalasam	-	A pot-shaped silver vessel adorned with mango leaves and a coconut smeared with turmeric and vermillion
Kalasam	-	Water vessel, integral to certain sacred Hindu rites
Kalpavirusha	-	Wish fulfilling tree
Kandarva	-	Celestial beings fromIndra's heaven
Karma	-	Action, deed
Karma Marga	-	The path of action
Karpagraham	-	Sanctum Sanctorum
Karpuram	-	Camphor
Kartha	-	Performer
Kavasam	-	Armour,covering, applying chanthanam on idol
Kaviyam	-	Epic poem
Ketti Melam	-	Nadhaswaram and Thavil played loudly
Kiriya	-	Worship according to the Agamas
Kiriya Marga	-	Religious action, worship
Kodimaram	-	Flag pole at the temple entrance
Kolam	-	Decorative designs drawn on the floor, stone etc. with the powder, flower, flour paste etc.
Komuhai	-	A temple gutter whose opening resembles a cow's head
Koorcham	-	A bunch of dharpais tied at one end
Kriya (action)	-	One of the paths of the Saiva Sidhaantha
Kriya Sakthi	-	Action power, operative energy
Krodham	-	Hatred
Kumbaabishekam	-	The consecration of an idol by pouring water frm the sacrificial pots with appropriate ceremonies
Kumbam	-	A pot of water adorned with a husked coconut and mango leaves representing the deity
Kumkum	-	Auspicious red mark worn on forehead, made of turmeric and slaked lime

Kurukkal - The chief priest in a temple
Kuththu Vilakku - A standing lamp
Layam - Dissolution
Malam - Fetters
Mantras - Mystic formula, music syllable or word symbol uttered during the performance of the rituals or meditation
Maya - Illusion
Melam - Musical instruments
Moham - Fascination
Moksha - Salvation, liberation after death, heaven
Moorthy - Deity, permanently installed in the Sanctum Sanctorum
Mount - The vehicle of God
Mukthi - Salvation, liberation
Mulai Paaligai - Germinating seeds in an earthen pot
Murukku - Palas tree
Nadham - Primordial Sound
Naamasmarana - Remembering God through His name
Nayuruvi - Rough chaff tree
Nadhaswaram - Musical instrument
Naivedhyam - The ritualistic offering of cooked food, fruits etc. to a deity
Nakshathra - Stars
Nandhi - A white bull, the mount of Lord Shiva
Navathanyam - 9 types of grains - paddy, wheat, green gram, Bengal gram, horse gram, sesame seeds, field beans, toor dhal, urid dhal
Neem - Margosa tree (Veambu)
Niyamas - Restrained, religious duty, rules and regulations
Om - The most sacred mantra of Shiva
Omkaaram A name of God as the source of primal sound AUM
Paaranam - To take food before 8.30am the day after fasting
Paasam - Bound
Paddhati - Guide book for temple rituals

Panchabootham - Five elements - Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Space
Panchakavyam - Mixture of milk, curd, ghee, dung and urine of a cow. Considered to be a purifying substance
Panchamirtham - Cow's milk, curd, ghee, honey and chakkarai
Panchatcharam - Most sacred mantra "Namasivaya", 5 syllable mantra of Shiva
Pasu - Soul
Patcham - Lunar fortnight - from Prathamai to Chathurdhasi
Pathi - God
Pavithram - Ring made from dharpai
Pidhir - Paternal ancestors
Pidhir dharpanam - Pouring water with dharpai and sesame seeds to the departed manes or spirits
Pidhir Sirartham - Annual sacrifices to the manes of a deceased father
Pidhir Yagna - Offering to the ancestors
Pindam - A ball made of rice flour, urid dhal flour, sesame seeds, milk, curd, ghee, honey and banana
Pooja - Ritual worship
Prana - Life force, vital air
Pradakshina - Walking around the temple in a clockwise direction
Prakaram - Courtyard
Pralaya - End of cosmos
Prasadham - Things distributed to the devotees after they are offered to the deity
Prema - Love
Punniyavasanam - Purification, propitious ceremony
Puraanam - Sacred narrative stories / religious stories
Purusharthaas (4) - The 4 aims of life, Aram (righteousness), Porul (wealth), Inbam (happiness), Veedu (salvation)
Rajagopuram - The tower crowning the main entrance
Rajas - One of the gunas of nature, Rajas is the quality of passion, energy and attachment

Rudraksha	-	Sacred bead worn by saints
Rupam	-	Form
Saathva	-	One of the 3 gunas of nature, it is the quality of purity, brightness, peace of harmony
Sacred ash	-	Vibhuthi
Saiva Siddhantha	-	Philosophy of religion
Saivites	-	Devotees of Lord Siva
Samadhi	-	The supreme state of peace
Sanctum Sanctorum	-	Shrine of the main deity in a temple
Sankalpam	-	A solemn vow or declaration of purpose to perform any ritual observance
Sannidhi	-	The place where the deity is in a temple
Sandhya	-	Evening
Sarvaroga Nivarani	-	Panacea, a remedy for all kinds of diseases
Shrishti	-	Creation of the cosmos
Siddhi	-	Success, power
Sirartham	-	Ceremonies performed annually in remembrance of the dead
Sristi	-	Creation
Suddhi	-	Purification
Sumangali	-	Happily married women who adorns kumkum and flowers
Surya	-	Sun
Suukshma	-	Subtle form
Thamas	-	One of the gunas of nature, it is the quality of dullness, darkness and evil tendencies
Thamboolam	-	Betel leaves and areca nuts
Thapas	-	Austerity, Penance
Thavil	-	A kind of drum
Thevarams	-	Devotional Hymns sung by Appar, Sambanthar and Sundarar
Thirumantram	-	Holy incantation, wrote by Rishi Thirumular
Thithi	-	Lunar day, phase of moon
Thudakku	-	Defilement
Trinity/Thirumurthy	-	Brahma, Vishnu, Siva
Trisoola	-	A three pronged spear or trident wield of Lord Shiva

Ubavaasam	-	Fasting - comprising abstinence from food and drink
Uthsava Moorthy	-	Idols made of metals and are meant to be taken in a procession during festivals
Vaakku	-	Speech
Vaasthu shastram	-	Rules of architecture
Vaahanam	-	Mount/vehicle of the deity
Vaishnavites	-	Devotees of Lord Vishnu
Vastrams		Dhoti and shawl
Vibhuthi	-	Sacred ash
Vidhya	-	Practical knowledge
Vidhyaaramba	-	Initiation into studies
Vimana	-	Tall tower above the sanctum sanctorum of the temple
Vinthu	-	Unified form of the soul, mind and lust
Waning period of the moon	-	Period from Full moon to New moon
Waxing period of the moon	-	Period from New moon to Full moon
Yamadharmaraja (Yama)	-	God of death

3 Elements	-	Pathi, Pasu, Paasam (God, Soul, Bond)
3 Malas	-	Aanava, Kanma, Maya (Arrogance, Action, Illusion)
3 Flames	-	Sun, Moon, Agni (fire)
5 Divine functions	-	Creation, Protection, Destruction, Concealment, Conferment of Grace
3 Karanas	-	Manam, Vaakku, Kayam (Mind, Speech, Body)
3 Gunas (Qualities)	-	Sathva, Rajas, Thamas
3 Sakthis	-	Ichcha, Kiriya, Gnana
5 Faces of Siva	-	Easanam, Thatpurusham, Agoram, Vamadevam, Sathyojatham
Trinity	-	Brahma, Vishnu, Siva

Tamil Calendar Months

Chithirai	-	Mid-April to Mid-May
Vaikasi	-	Mid-May to Mid-June
Aani	-	Mid-June to Mid-July
Aadi	-	Mid-July to Mid-August
Aavani	-	Mid-August to Mid-September
Purattasi	-	Mid-September to Mid-October
Aipasi	-	Mid-October to Mid-November
Karthigai	-	Mid-November to Mid-December
Margazhi	-	Mid-December to Mid-January
Thai	-	Mid-January to Mid-February
Maasi	-	Mid-February to Mid-March
Panguni	-	Mid-March to Mid-April

Days of the week

Sunday	-	Gnaayiru
Monday	-	Thingal
Tuesday	-	Chevaai
Wednesday	-	Puthan
Thursday	-	Viyaazhan
Friday	-	Velli
Saturday	-	Sani

Thithis (Lunar days)

Amavaasai	-	New Moon day
Prathamai	-	1st day
Thuthiyai	-	2nd day
Thiruthiyai	-	3rd day
Chathurthi	-	4th day

Panchami	-	5th day
Sashti	-	6th day
Sabthami	-	7th day
Attami	-	8th day
Navami	-	9th day
Thasami	-	10th day
Ekadhasi	-	11th day
Thuvadhasi	-	12th day
Thrayodhasi	-	13th day
Chathurdhasi	-	14th day
Pournami	-	Full Moon day

(The same Thithis (ie. Prathamai to Chathurdhasi) repeat again from Full Moon to New Moon.)

Names of the 12 houses (Rasis) of the zodiac

Rasis			Signs
Mehdam	-	Aries	Ram
Idabam	-	Taurus	Bull
Midhunam	-	Gemini	Twins
Kadagam	-	Cancer	Crab
Singham	-	Leo	Lion
Kanni	-	Virgo	Virgin
Thulam	-	Libra	Scales
Viruchikam	-	Scorpio	Scorpion
Thanu	-	Sagittarius	Archer
Makaram	-	Capricorn	Sea Goat
Kumbam	-	Aquarius	Water Bearer
Meenam	-	Pisces	Fish

Planets and the corresponding days of the week

Planets			Days		
Sooriyan	-	Sun	Gnaayiru	-	Sunday
Chandran	-	Moon	Thingal	-	Monday
Angaragan	-	Mars	Chevaai	-	Tuesday
Puthan	-	Mercury	Puthan	-	Wednesday
Guru	-	Jupiter	Viyaazhan	-	Thursday
Sukkiran	-	Venus	Velli	-	Friday
Sani	-	Saturn	Sani	-	Saturday
Raaghu	-	The Moon's ascending node			
Kethu	-	The Dragon's descending node			





Notes



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